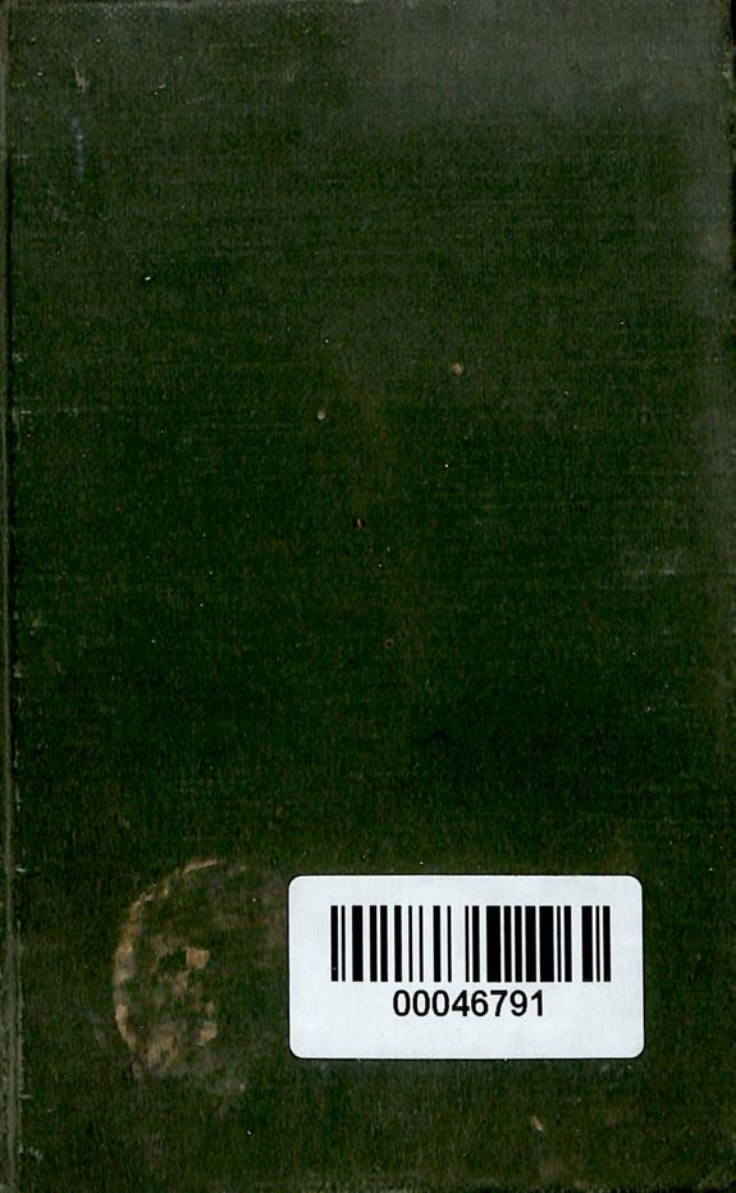
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LAYS OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS

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By JOHN STUART BLACKIE

PROFESSOR OF GREEK IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

46791

LL g 35

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ADVERTISEMENT.

Some of the poems in this volume appeared previously in the "Lays and Legends of Ancient Greece;" but that work has been long out of print, and will not be published again in its original shape.

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE BARONESS BURDETT COUTTS.

High-fortuned lady, bountiful and kind,
Whom to behold is to be touched with good,
Whom in her proud heart England holds enshrined,
Pure type of noblest Christian womanhood!
As a poor child from grassy down may cull
A wilding bloom on which a thronèd queen
Shall smile, and justly deem more beautiful
Than all the stars that gem the courtly scene;
So thou in thy great march of gracious deeds,
And loving triumphs which subdue all foes,
Slight not the poet; though for human needs
His empty hand no healing bounty shows,
His soulful songs do scatter fruitful seeds
On breezy wing, whence godlike virtue grows.

OBAN,

July 8, 1872.

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A TALK WITH THE TOURISTS.

FELLOW WANDERERS,—

THIS book is a book for you—not, indeed, consciously written for you — composed rather with no conscious purpose at all, but merely to pour forth the spontaneous, happy moods of my own soul, as they came upon me during many years' rambling among the Bens and Glens of my Scottish fatherland; but, as it has turned out, it is a book well suited for your migratory needs and vagabond habits; and therefore I desire to have an hour's talk with you, partly to introduce myself, that you may understand how much I am one of yourselves, and how far I deserve your confidence; partly to put a clue into your hand which may lead you through the pleasant mazes of our mountain world in a more distinct and practical way than was possible in the form of verse. For, the Muse, whether she be a linnet or a lark, in her utterances can obey only one law; she has pleasure only in the beautiful, and will not descend from her leafy spray, or her airy poise, to subserve any vulgar

utilities, and set stepping stones, however necessary, even for the passage of a king. I will, therefore, in my character as a fellow tourist, and not with my special function as a mountain bird, take you by the hand for a few minutes, and conduct you geographically from point to point of my lyrical stations, that you may feel with a firm prosaic certainty that I know what I am talking about, and, like an old soldier, am entitled to be eloquent on battles.

But first let me tell you how I came to know so much about the Highlands. Some forty years ago or more I made a vow that I would visit some new district of my own country every year; and this vow I have conscientiously kept once or twice indeed, from the stress of circumstances, in the meagre way of visiting a different corner of the same district, but compensating amply for this defect by going to many of the more attractive parts of the country twice or thrice, or even a whole dozen of times. In this way, it has come to pass that there are very few districts of my native land, from the green graves of the two drowned Margarets in Wigtoun, to the bleak and black savageness of Cape Wrath, and the Fuggla rock in Shetland, which I have not visited; and, as my way of travelling has generally been either wholly pedestrian, or largely mixed up with that most natural, most profitable, most poetical, and most salubrious of all methods of locomotion, it has happened that the features of many of our most beautiful

Highland districts, under their most beautiful aspects, with all the best emotions which a familiarity with them can create, and all the patriotic associations with which they are intertwined, have become part of my life and of the atmosphere which I breathe, to an extent and with an intensity that has fallen to the lot of very few of you, my fellow tourists, from the south of the Tweed, or even of the most itinerant of my own countrymen. I am therefore, naturally, not without hope that the pictures of natural scenery and the historical reminiscences which this little book contains, fanned into existence by the fresh breath of the strong Highland Bens, and flushed with the native purple of the heather—wild flowers, to use a phrase of the botanists, plucked and described *in situ*—may be serviceable in helping you to transmute into a permanent possession of your inner nature, what might otherwise have been permitted to flit grandly, but vaguely, before your outer sense like views in a revolving panorama.

In order to follow the range of my sketches, the most convenient point of departure will be that great pivot of Highland touring—Oban. We shall, therefore, if you please, start from Glasgow: for, till the railway from Callander to Oban shall have been completed (which may the Fates as long as possible retard!), very few tourists from England or the South of Scotland will find their way to what an eloquent female friend of mine calls "the Celtic Naples,"

otherwise than from the basis of the Caledonian Liverpool; and even, after the land route shall have been opened, none but persons of extremely queasy stomachs and weak nerves will be willing to sacrifice the rich and shifting beauties of the voyage by the Kyles of Bute and the Crinan Canal for the barren gain of a few hours' additional celerity. You will, therefore, if you are wise, sail from the Broomielaw, Glasgow, or, if it suits you better, two hours later from Greenock, in Mr. Hutchinson's magnificent steam-boat, the Iona—"*urbis opus*," in Virgilian phrase, "a town, not a ship"—and find yourself in Oban, weary with nothing but the continual feast of picturesque novelty to the eye, in time for a very early London dinner—that is to say, about 6 o'clock—after a sail of about nine or ten hours. But, if you have time to spare, I advise you, before leaving your basis of operations so far behind, to take a peep at the Island of Arran on your way: and for this purpose you may stop a night at Dunoon or Rothesay, or any other port, from which you are within an hour's call of an Arran boat. For it is one of the primary conditions of profitable touring that, as far as possible, you do not shoot merely, in railway style, from one terminus to another, but halt at intermediate stations, so that by living experience, the grand bearings of the country, and some of its prettiest outs and ins, may become part of your familiar associations. Stay then for a day, or if possible a

week in Arran, and meditate with me (if the midges will allow you) to a Wordsworthian tune in the long-drawn loneliness of Glen-Rosa, or among the giant-fronted heights of Ben Gnuis, behind Brodick, where once, on a lovely Sunday, I indulged in the contemplations which you will find at page 185 of this volume. Or, if you are not disposed for pious meditation among the mountains—which, however, I strongly advise you to cultivate, as, whether, on Sunday or Saturday, far more profitable, at least for British natures, than that eternal French rattle and jingle, or the heavy atmosphere of German tobacco and beeriness—then you may turn scientific eyes upon the rocks, and geologize; for which fashionable and healthy recreation there is no better field in the three kingdoms than this little Island of Arran—being, in fact, a repetition on a small scale of the whole geology of Scotland, and only wanting the clay and gravel, chalk and lime formations of the South Eastern section of England, to be an epitome of the whole crust of Great Britain.

And let me give you here a small bit of advice, if your education in physical science, as too often happens with young Englishmen, has been altogether neglected. If you wish to know as much of geology as will enable you to put questions to the experts in the science, and understand the answer, you may do so, if you are a tourist, at the very smallest expense. Just use your eyes, as Mr. Ruskin teaches the painters to use theirs, and, with the assistance of one of those

maps of the stratified surface of the country, which you may purchase for a few shillings, you will soon learn to read the true order out of the most confused jumble of rocky matter, much more easily than many a schoolboy extracts plain English out of the luxuriant roll of a Platonic sentence or the terse involutions of Thucydides. Be particular to note the various aspects of the stones at the mouth of the mountain torrents or on the sea beach; and, better still, on the ready-made stone dykes, so common in Scotland, where the work of the hammer has been already performed to your eye. Where the beach is white and sandy, be sure that you have either granite, or gneiss, or sandstone in the adjacent rocks, or at least that the sea bottom, covered with the poundings of these rocks from no very distant locality, has been spumed up into the nooks and broad winding hollows of the land, and overspread the native rocky foundation with a cake of foreign material; where the beach and river channels are black, or brownish black, you are in a trap district; where, again, the pebbles in the river's bed, as at Glencoe, are spotted with various colours, be sure that the adjacent crags, which frown so sternly over head, will reveal to close inspection the native Mosaic of a beautiful porphyry. But close inspection is not always necessary to ascertain the materials of which a landscape is composed. The diverse features of the picturesque Isle of Skye, for instance, are composed of three diverse

kinds of rock: the dark savage green, sharply indented and grimly channelled crests of Blaven, Scuir-nan-gillean, and the highest of the south western Cuchullins, are composed of a hard gritty rock, called hypersthene; the rounded and softly sloping cones towards Broadford are granite; while the quaint fairy beauty of the Quiraing, at the north east end of the island, is trap. The man who spends a week in Skye, without learning to distinguish these three great classes of rocks by their mere outward configuration, has received the gift of sight in vain. He may amuse his legs with travelling, but he will never learn to look.

So much for geology—a digression perhaps, you will say: partly, perhaps, but certainly not altogether; for, if you move amongst mountains, as every Highland tourist must do, you will naturally wish to distinguish their physiognomics; and if you look with speculation in your eyes, you can hardly avoid asking yourself the question occasionally, how these giant cones were heaved up; how these dark chasms, and huge cauldrons were hollowed out; how these strange solitary boulders were transported; how these long stretches of green platform were raised and levelled; how that quaint succession of conical knolls came to stand in the middle of the wide gravelly plain; and to ask any one of these questions is to begin the study of geology, as all genuine study should begin, with asking a question. But our present business is with

Oban. We shall suppose you, therefore, safely landed there, from that elegant steam-ship the Chevalier, into which, at Crinan, you have been transferred from the magnificent Iona: we shall suppose, also, that you have found and enjoyed a comfortable night's sleep there—an achievement that used to be not always easy in the season when the tourist world chiefly swarms. We shall suppose you, also, up betimes in the morning and inhaling the freshness of a bland south-wester on Columba-terrace (a crescent curve of the beach, properly, popularly, and more poetically called the CORRAN, i. e., *the sickle*), and meditating one of those sea-flights, which, like a native water-bird, the Oban tourist joyfully achieves. You move on to the point of departure on the pier, and form one of that motley swarm of flitting people of whom a local rhymer graphically sings:

"At Oban all the world you see,
The doctor and the scholar,
The poor man with his penny fee,
The rich man with his dollar;
The father with his hopeful boy,
The mother with her daughters,
All flock to splash about with joy,
Like ducks in Oban waters.

"At Oban, on the pier how gay,
How motley, and how grand, sir,
With tourists all in quaint array,
About to leave the land, sir!
The priest who steals short holiday,
The prince who goes incog., sir,

The schoolboy with his dreams of play,
The sportsman with his dog, sir.

"The dark Italian and the Greek,
The light-haired Northern nation,
In Oban all unite to seek
Their summer recreation:
The Yankee with his long clay face,
The rubicund port drinker,
The Frenchman with his nimble pace,
The broad-browed German thinker."

In what direction, then, do you mean to make your first flight? That will depend upon inclination and circumstance; but, for our present convenience, let us take GLENCOE. Two hours' sail will bring you to BALLACHULISH (*Bal-caolas*, the *town of the narrow sea-strait*), at the mouth of Loch Leven—perhaps, upon the whole, the most beautiful sea-loch landscape in the Highlands. Arrived here, the regular drift of tourists is carried along the south bank of the loch, and then across the Coe (shortened from *Cona*, *narrow*), half-way up the glen, and then back again, to wait for the boat that returns in the evening from Fort William. But, if you are wise, and can spare the time, I advise you, by all means, to separate yourself from this drift, and to let Glencoe, with its frowning sublimities and dark reminiscences, grave itself with quiet completeness into your memory, by driving right through the glen from west to east, spending the night at King's House, and then returning next day to Ballachulish.

I have no more pleasant reminiscence of my Highland ramblings than that of a walk, on a bright summer's day, from King's House down the long narrow glen to Ballachulish. The contrast between the lone moors, treeless braes, precipitous Bens, and wild tumbling waters of the east end, and the luxuriant green quietude of Loch Leven at the west end—a bit of English beauty sleeping in the bosom of Highland grandeur—takes the eye of the mind captive with a grateful power of visual harmony, similar to what is experienced when one of Beethoven's cunningly balanced antagonisms of sweet sound possesses the ear. It is worth while staying a night at King's House, if it were only to look that magnificent Ben, the BUACHAILL ETIVE (the shepherd of Etive), fairly in the face. You never saw a Ben rising bolt upright with a more distinct emphasis; and yet it is by no means difficult to climb, if you assail it, as I did, from the west side, and are not to be deterred from your purpose by a threatened action of damages from any gentleman who may assert that the wild mountains in this part of the world belong to him exclusively, and to his gamekeeper. I have been threatened by these gentlemen more than once in my wanderings; but I have given them an answer simply, as I advise you to do, by walking straightforward, even though it should lead to jumping a dyke, as a distinguished professor of botany is celebrated to have done in Glen Tilt; and I will give them an answer here, in the form

of a sonnet, written on the moor before King's House, and which even now has the distinct fragrance of heather on its wing:—

> Deer-stalkers! you forsooth have got the Bens
> Of Scotland in your pockets! So: but I
> Will use wide Nature's range, and you may try
> With ducal Athol, to blockade the glens,
> Forging strange fetters for unchartered legs:
> But heather braes are free to any man,
> I hold, to tread, who bravely will and can,
> On a stout stomach lined with ham and eggs,
> The moorland breakfast orthodox, which no
> Wise man omits. Trust me, our mighty Bens
> You cannot coop, as henwives coop their hens;
> And, if to law with me you choose to go,
> You'll shear a sow, and reap, like many a fool,
> A great amount of din, and little wool.

So much for King's House, which I prefer to the Grand Hotel at Ballachulish, simply because it is not grand, and, if you want my reasons, you may read the two sonnets on Highland Inns in this book, and also the meditations with which the mountain Muse inspired me when hospitably entertained by a shepherd in a bothie at the south-west end of Loch Ericht. But I am forgetting what ought to be the grand text for my talking in this place. I have said nothing about the massacre. Well, for the history, I have no doubt, you will find what you want in Murray and Macaulay; and, if you wish to be more precise, I counsel you to read two excellent articles, by the present Lord Justice Clerk, of the Court of Session (late the Whig Lord

Advocate for Scotland), in the "Edinburgh Review" for October, 1857 and 1861. Meanwhile, recurring to the original position of the great mass of tourists who cannot taste the felicity of a night at King's House, and supposing that you have driven past the great slate works of Ballachulish—inferior in quality only to the famous Bangor slates in Wales—and are just about to cross the bridge of the Coe, where the road takes a sudden turn to the south, leaving the placid beauties of Loch Leven behind, I call upon you to note the ruins of the old house of INVERCOE, where the Mac-Donald was murdered, in the wood, on the right of the stream below the bridge. After you cross the bridge, and have fairly turned your face towards the grand peaks that bulwark the west end of the glen, you will see, on the further bank of the river, about a mile above the bridge, a little farm-house. This is INVERUGGAN, where Campbell of Glenlyon slept—if, indeed, he could sleep—on the night which ushered in the bloody morning of the massacre. About a mile farther up is ACHNACHOIN (*Dog-field*), a farm-house, also connected with the action of that base butchery. All these stations you will find alluded to in my ballad, which, whatever faults it may have, has at least the merit of being framed upon a firm back-bone of topographical and historical study. And now, I think, we may leave Glencoe with a good conscience; only, if you have time, when at Ballachulish, you should not omit to take a drive up the north side of the loch—a

rich and sunny strip, part of the inheritance of the noble clan of the Camerons—till you come to the green mountain Elysium of KINLOCH. Never shall I forget the soft silver charm of the beauty of this spot, when it first gleamed upon me, as I looked down into the steep glen, after having accomplished the rough mountain walk from the east end of Glencoe, to Loch Leven, commonly called the DEVIL'S STAIRCASE. Another hint I will give you. If you are a pedestrian, and are so happy, in this age of swift transportation, as to retain the firm faith that legs are better than steam in mountain districts, you could not do better than starting from the inn of CLACHICH (*stony*), at the west end of Glencoe, cut your way through a wild mountain pass, which, skirting the north base of the huge Ben to the south of Ballachulish, brings the wayfarer down to the head of Loch CRERAN, one of the loveliest and least-known of Highland waters. Arrived there, you may either cross the ferry, and return to Oban by land, or, going on to the lovely village of Appin, find the steamboat there, at the distance of only an hour's sail from the same head-quarters.

Weather permitting—but not in the face of blasts and buffetings, in the spirit of old Capaneus, who said he would take Thebes, whether Jove willed or willed not—but in fair weather, and not deterred even by thick mists, or smart showers, the Oban tourist will, of course, before all other distant flights, direct his course to STAFFA and IONA; and here I give him empha-

tically the same advice that I gave with regard to Glencoe. If he possibly can manage it, let him not allow himself to be drifted along that seat of ancient Celtic civilisation, like a powerless iceberg in the glacial period, but let him set his foot firmly on the soil, and take up his habitation for a day or two. Of course, this cannot be done at Staffa, unless, perhaps, you are a poet of the Shelley and Byron stamp, and then you may spend the night with stormy petrels and sea eagles, and put it all into immortal verse next morning; but at Iona there is an inn, where you may live very comfortably, feeding upon salmon, herrings, lobsters, and Iona flounders of rare excellence, which, I doubt not, would have been celebrated by Athenæus in some chapter of his erudite Epicurean gossip, had it been his good fortune to have travelled so far north. *Experto crede:* trust me who have done it. I lived ten days on this sacred isle, in great comfort of body, and luxury of soul. My forenoons I spent in rambling, at wayward ease, over every quaint crag, and down into every clear pebbly creek of the little island; and in the evening, looking out from the inn window on the lofty peaks of Jura, and the red granite slabs of the coast of Mull glowing in the rays of the setting sun, I pondered over the old Latin book containing the life of the great local saint (Reeve's edition, of course), and endeavoured to realise the venerable wonders of that age of heroic monks and fervid apostles—an age in whose traditions miracles sprung

up as spontaneously and as plenteously as flowers on the wayside. What a twinkling mirage of pious and pure idealism was here, and how little of stable reality! In this book, as in the Arabian Nights, one expects to find a genius, or a fairy, or a magician at every turn; the flow of pious emotion in the devout soul of these writers teems with angelic and saintly wonder, as exuberantly as the sea on a summer night, when the green wave is quick with luminous life. But this, however beautiful, was not what I wanted: I am a realist and a Protestant, and fished in this book for facts, as a fisher for trouts in the deep pool. But from the whole weighty quarto, after some stout fits of reading, there stood out only three great pictures that looked like facts—facts garnished with fable no doubt, and seasoned in the outer links and flourishes of them with wonder; but in their framework solid and stable —very blood and bone of the best and most ennobling kind of historic fact. These pictures were the account of the self-inflicted banishment of the royal apostle from his native Erin, and voyage across the stormy sea to the grey Pictish isle destined to be the metropolis of a new bishoprick; then the picture of the expedition of the saint through the great glen of the Highlands, now called the Caledonian Canal, to the capital of the Picts at Inverness, crowned by the conversion of King Brude; and, thirdly, the picture of the last hours of the saint in serene old age, in the little cell which had for so many years been witness

to his faithful and effective devotions. Of these three pictures, the first and the last so fixed themselves on my fancy, that, before leaving the island, I set them down in the form of the two ballads which are printed in this book. In the first ballad I was obliged to take a certain large liberty of construction, in order to bring into one consistent narrative scraps of tradition that lay scattered in different parts of the book, or in the instructive notes of the learned editor; in the second, I followed almost literally, in all essential points, the account of the euthanasia of the saint, as given by his admiring disciple. No person, indeed, of any taste could dare to touch, with the finger of impertinent decoration, a record which, for simple and sacred pathos, has no superior, except in the Gospel of St. John, and in the last chapters of the Phædo of Plato, where the death of Socrates is described.

I will add one word here on the topographical features of the isle. It is only about two miles and a half long, running from north to south, and about a mile broad, rising into rocky slopes and strange fantastic knolls at both ends, and divided in the middle by an open space of broad sandy beach and fragrant green meadow, called in Gaelic *Machar*. The elevation of the heights is nowhere above 500 feet; but, from the position of the island, the view both landward and seaward which the highest ground commands is one of the finest in the Highlands. But the great charm of the island to me was the number of secluded

little tiny bays, into which its coast everywhere, except on the north and north-east corner has been scooped. In these cool and pure retreats the gneiss quartz, and other rocks of the district are rolled into the smoothest and most symmetric shapes. On the south coast of the island is a bay covered with gneiss pebbles, many of which are of a perfectly circular or elliptical form; these can be picked up, and when painted on with the taste that belongs to a dexterous lady-limner, make a beautiful ornament for the writing-table or the boudoir. In this bay also there stands out through the sand a rock shaped like the keel of an inverted boat, in which local tradition recognises the very coracle in which the Hibernian saint performed his first adventurous voyage. From the highest point of the crags above this bay, looking southward, the mountains of Islay are discerned, but not the Irish coast. This is alluded to in the ballad as part of the old tradition. The coast of Mull, opposite this bay, composed as it is of huge slabs of red granite, has a singularly weird aspect, and is well displayed to the tourist as he trends round from the south-coast of that most beautiful and various of the western isles. This striking stretch of coast is described in the concluding part of the first ballad, as having been passed by Columba in his voyage from Corryvreckan, whither he had been driven by a violent gale from the south-west. For fuller details, both as to the history of the saint and the topography of the island, the reader may

be referred to the Duke of Argyll's book (London, 1870), and for the ecclesiastical antiquities to a work by the Bishop of Argyll.

In visiting Staffa and Iona, the tourist has necessarily made at least an external acquaintance with the island of MULL. This is an island very little visited by the general tourist; but, as it happens to be specially familiar to my foot, and is perhaps, taken as a whole, the most beautiful of our western isles, I must say a word about it here. From Oban's sea-fronting bay the most prominent object which fixes the gaze of the stranger in the far west is the lofty height of BEN MORE (big mount) with its three graceful cones. From the topmost peak of that Ben is seen one of the grandest and most various panoramas in the Highlands. What that panorama contains you will learn from the verses which I wrote on the green braes near Salen, on the day after having achieved the ascent. For visiting Mull, Salen, half-way between Oban and Tobermory, is the readiest starting-point. You are there only about five miles from the north base of the three-coned Ben; and you may hire a waggonette at the inn, which will take you to the foot of the stony glen (Glen CHLACHICH), at the upper end of which a steep ascent leads by a zig-zag bridle road to Loch SCRIEDAN, which skirts the south base of the huge mountain. You may scale the Ben either direct from KINLOCH Scriedan, or, if you are stout-footed, you may turn to the right, when you reach the watershed

on your way from Salen at the head of Glen Chlachich, and find your way westwards to the highest peak, as you best can. I achieved the whole distance in the opposite direction from Kinloch over the top of the Ben to Salen, on foot; but I remember it was a tough and a rough day's work. Four miles from Salen, as you approach the base of the mountain, you pass a beautiful green platform at the end of a loch, with a rustic house upon it; the loch is Loch Baa, or the Cow's Loch (*bos*, *βοῦς*), and the house is the Mull retreat of the Duke of Argyll, to whom a large section of this beautiful island belongs. The loch is about three miles long, stretching from west to east amid a fair embosoment of Bens; one of the loveliest little lochs to my thinking in the Highlands, and to which I have paid a happy annual visit now for not a few years. The picturesque house and wooded lawn opposite the Duke's lodge, on the north bank of the short river that issues out of the west end of the lake, is Glenhorsa, the property of Colonel Greenhill Gardyne; and the graceful conical hill mantled in the fairest green, at the east end of the loch, on which the white cloud rests with such a sweet repose, and which the westering sun bathes with such a rich flow of floating gold, is Ben Tealladh, or the hill of prospect—so called, not because it commands the most extensive survey in the island,—for this of course belongs to Ben More—but because, from its singular isolation, it gives the eye a free sweep all round within a

certain range. You may ascend this Ben easily from Salen, and when you are on the top, turning your eye eastward, you will perceive the long silver line of a mountain river, along the banks of which bends a road that will bring you to the east point of the island, from which the mail-packet will carry you across to Oban. Or, if you wish to make your exit from the island westward, you may walk from Kinloch Scriedan to BUNESSAN (*foot of the waterfall*), near which you may inspect the cliffs of ARDTUN, where the Duke of Argyll made some interesting geological discoveries. From Bunessan, a walk of six miles, leads you to the narrow ferry which separates the extreme west arm of Mull from Iona. This arm is popularly known by the name of the Ross—that is, the long headland—and is composed of red granite, from which immense slabs have been quarried. The position of the granite here in the lowest part of the island is in Scotland at least somewhat singular; all the more elevated points, including the peaks of Ben More, being composed of different varieties of trap—a rock to whose presence we owe that peculiar quaint picturesqueness and occasional graceful oddity which characterise the features of the landscape in Mull and the adjoining mainland.

We now return to Oban; for thither, as the lark to its nest, the wise tourist will always return, till he has exhausted the beauties of this most rich and various of Highland regions. I will conduct you now

to one of my favourite summer haunts—to Ben CRUACHAN (*cruach*, a cone), and Loch AWE. You should stay all night at TAYNUILT (*burn-house*), only twelve miles and a half from Oban, and take the Ben and the lake next day at your leisure. I shall say nothing about the loch, and the dark rushing flood that connects it with Loch Etive. It is past description in prose; in poetry I have taken from it some of the principal features of the song of the Highland river, with which this book concludes. As for the Ben, it is assuredly one of the most graceful, and, from its vicinity to Oban, happily one of the best known mountains in the Highlands. It rises sheer from the north-end of Loch Awe, towering up into two sharply-peaked cones, separated by a thin jagged shingly ridge of about a mile long. The view from the top is not perhaps either so extensive or so various as that from Ben More, in Mull, or Ben Screel, on Loch Hourn; but it is, nevertheless, one of the finest in Britain. In the autumn of 1871 I had the good fortune to make the ascent of this mountain under what appeared at first very unfavourable circumstances; thick rolling mists came racing up from the east, just as we stood on the shoulder of the Ben, and enveloped both the peaks. In spite of these evil omens, however, myself and another of the party, along with a faithful little sky-terrier, persevered till we reached the easternmost peak, and were rewarded by the splendid dioramic spectacle attempted to be described in the verses. Tourists

who scale Highland Bens should beware of entertaining the notion that a misty day is always a bad day for a mountain expedition. A permanent dull drizzling mist of course is hopeless; but a trailing or a sweeping mist offers precisely those variations and contrasts of light and shade in which the poetry of Highland landscape consists; and even in the midst of what appeared the most impenetrable veil of settled cloud, I have sometimes seen the sunlit peaks of the surrounding Bens peer out above the falling folds of the mist in a fashion of miraculous beauty before which I stood in mute wonder. No man, who fears rain and shuns mist, can know the Highlands. Like human beauties, the Bens are not less but more attractive, because they use a veil which they may lift at their sweet pleasure. But, as human beauties require to be admired with caution, especially when their veils permit only occasional glimpses of their charms, so he who wanders through the mist-enfolded Bens must look well to his chart, mark his paces, and be sure of his bearings. All things are easy to a man who calculates; everything is dangerous to a fool.

We now leave Oban—supposing, of course, that you have duly inspected DUNOLLY Castle, the hoar stronghold of the great clan of the MacDougalls, and DUNSTAFFNAGE Castle, long connected with the ascendant star of the Campbells—and steer our course northward to the most famous of the isles. But we shall take FORT WILLIAM on our way, and the classic soil, where

Prince Charles landed in the brilliant, bold, and brainless adventure of 1745. At Fort William—a name that, like King's House, marks sufficiently the march of a paid soldiership into the strongholds of old martial clanship—you will sleep all night, if you mean to scale the broad-breasted Nevis next morning; if not, you will go on to BANAVIE, and visit there with me the monument raised by the gratitude of the Highlanders to one of the greatest of the clan Cameron, which still holds sway in these parts. The "Lay of the brave Cameron," which I wrote when in those parts, is taken strictly in every detail from the real history, as you will find it in the life of the hero, by the Rev. Archibald Clerk, of KILMALLY, editor and translator of the last splendid edition of Ossian, published at the expense of the Marquis of Bute. From Kilmally you will proceed westward, a tramp of some twenty-eight miles to ARISAIG, the first station at which the boat calls on its journey northward, after passing the blustering bluff of Ardnamurchan. On your road up the north shore of Loch EIL (*Ial*, a thong), about eight miles from Banavie, you pass the house of FASSFEARN (*Alder growth*), where the hero of Quatre Bras was born and bred—an old mansion house, once merry with the festive hospitalities of the Cameron clan, now fallen into the occupancy of the "big farmer," who, destitute of any local ties, and performing no social duties to the district, spends his time and his money in some far south part of the country. At GLENFINNAN, where

the clan took the oath to Charlie, after his rash landing at Borrowdale in the '45, you may indulge such meditations as I have set down at p. 118 of this volume; or, if you are a Jacobite, you will find something that will suit you in Professor Aytoun's admirable lays; but I am a Presbyterian, and believe that the true heroism of that age lay with the Covenanters, not with the Cavaliers. Between Glenfinnan and KINLOCH AYLORT the walk is lofty, bleak, wild, and lonely; from Kinloch to Arisaig it is rich, various, and picturesque. The coast at Arisaig is all rough with long straggling reefs of the gneiss rock, which is dominant along the west coast, not at all a comfortable place to land at, and a very perilous piece of water to be taken aback in by a squall, as once happened to me; nevertheless, if the weather is fair, I should advise you by no means, when you are in this quarter, to omit a visit to the opposite island of EIGG, after Staffa certainly the most curious geological phenomenon patent to the unprofessional eye in the British isles. This done, you may either take the Skye steamboat at Arisaig (once a week only it calls at Eigg), or you may take a most romantic walk all along the coast of MOYDART and the south-end of Loch SHEIL, to Salen on the north shore of Loch Sunart, whence you may take a boat to the beautiful little harbour of TOBERMORY in Mull. It is a district little known to tourists; but Loch Moidart certainly deserves a place with Loch Auchelty behind Strathpeffer, Loch Assynt in Wester

Ross, and the famous Loch Katrine, in the first rank of Caledonian lochs. The natives of this part of the country are still mostly Catholics: a significant fact; the best friends of Prince Charlie were the Romanists; and therein certainly, if we will probe to the core of the affair, in Protestant Britain lay the true cause of the failure of his brilliant enterprise. We shall suppose now that you are in the Skye steamboat, feeling it may be a little queasy when the big billow rudely smites your timber ends, as you pass by the storm-shattered front of ARDNAMURCHAN; but that will soon pass. You get into the shelter of the islands anon, and will land, if you are wise, at GLENELG, in order to take a peep at the rare old Pictish forts a mile up the glen there; and after that to spend a day at Loch DUICH, unquestionably one of the most lovely spots that I know in the Highlands, especially on a calm Sunday forenoon. The greenness and comparative culture of the environment of this loch put me in mind of Grasmere, only on a larger plan, and in a grander frame. From Loch Duich you may cross over the narrow ferry to KYLE AKIN in Skye (*caol, narrow;* AIKEN, I believe, was a giant, one of that race which existed everywhere in Britain long ago, as you will find in Geoffrey of Monmouth and King Arthur). And here, for fear of growing tedious, I must leave you in charge of the guide-books to follow out all the wild beauties of this remarkable island, from Coruisk to Quiraing. If I were to tell you all that I know about

them, having visited the isle several times with ample leisure, I should be in danger, like Alexander Smith, of writing a book. I may only say, generally, that having set foot in Ægina and Salamis, as well as Mull and Skye, I am prepared from full lungs to sing chorus to the rhyme of a native minstrel:—

"The beautiful isles of Greece
Full many a bard has sung;
But the isles I love best lie far in the west,
Where men speak the Gaelic tongue.
Jerusalem, Athens and Rome,
I would see them before I die,
But I'd rather not see any one of the three
Than be exiled for ever from Skye;"

and specially I pay my devotions to that weird, grim-crested BLAVEN, which fronts your gaze eastward, as you look down from the peak of Scuir-nan-Gillean, the highest point of the island, commanding a wide survey of the most savage of all savage regions, where Lord Byron, when he penned the sublime audacities of his "Manfred," would have found a home even more congenial to his lofty genius than the frost-bound precipices of the Jungfrau. After having made yourself familiar with the gloom and glory of the Cuchullins—the weather in its fitful way having given you, it is to be hoped, a taste of both—you may encamp at PORTREE for a day or two, till you find a boat that will transport you to the GAIRLOCH (GAER, *short*); or, if you shun the sea, not always wisely to be sought in those regions, I believe there is a railway now at

Jametoun, which you may reach by crossing the ferry at Kyle-Akin; and, arrived there, you will have no difficulty in walking upon plain ways along the south shore of Loch Maree to the Gairloch, and thence to Pool-Ewe: all which places should be taken together in order to have a firm grasp of that superb amphitheatre of Bens, which bounds this most picturesque region on the landward side. But, as I am not writing a guide-book, but only following the track of my verses, I must jump over this district—dear as it is to my memory—and also that not less wonderful tract in the neighbourhood of Loch Assynt, Scouric, Laxford, Durness, and Cape Wrath, in order to arrive at Strathnaver in Sutherland. This glen, so famous in the sad story of Celtic depopulation, I reached by a most interesting route, starting from Durness, not far from Cape Wrath, crossing the ferry at Loch Eribol, and proceeding by the north end of Loch Hope, across the high, open moor, to the beautiful and well-cultured little town of Tongue, once the heritage of the Reay family, now absorbed into the princely domain of the Duke of Sutherland. Thence skirting the base of that singularly beautiful mountain Ben Loyal, I came to Aultnaharra, almost the very central point of Sutherlandshire, and, resting there for a night, next day walked down the whole length of bonnie Strathnaver to the sea. During this walk I came upon vast heaps of the ruined clachans, whence the people had been driven to make way for the

economical reform commonly called the big-farm system; and, when arrived at the bottom of the strath on the sea-coast, I found myself in the midst of one of those marine cities of refuge into which the ousted crofters had been huddled; those of them at least who had not found their way to America. The sight of these things brought forth, as was almost unavoidable, the verses on "Bonnie Strathnaver," which are to be found at p. 143 of this volume; and which, along with other verses of a similar import at p. 48 and p. 166 seem to call for a short word of explanation.

I never belonged to the class of persons who were eager to raise an indiscriminate cry against those landed proprietors who might for various reasons have seen fit to thin the population of any particular district in the Highlands. Unquestionably there were, and there still may be, cases where a certain amount of emigration is as beneficial to those who leave the country as to those who remain in it. But as in gardening, so in rural economy, weeding is one thing, and extirpation is another. The clearance question, like most others that occur in the complex relations of social life, is always a question of degree. In order to form a just judgment on any such case local knowledge is always necessary; and any wandering rhymer, like myself, who pictures a particular case, is not thereby bringing a special charge against any individual landowner, but merely saying, through an

example, that in his conviction by a one-sided system of economy a human wrong has been done which deserves the tribute of a human tear. As to the right and wrong of the matter generally, this depends on a balance of moral and economical considerations, the operation of which in particular cases will always be difficult to define. Those who hold that a proprietor of land stands in no other relation to the acres of the country, and its population, than to the gold in his pocket, and that according to the English idea of extreme individualism, he may do what he likes with his own, will, of course, find no difficulty in dealing with questions of this kind; but such persons must be reminded that by acting on such principles, proprietors turn themselves into mere land merchants, and disown altogether those social obligations on the foundation of which the position of our aristocracy was secured, and their privileges conferred. The first duty of a landed aristocracy, not only by British tradition, but by the inflexible rules of a wise agrarian policy, is to protect and cherish the local population, the stout and healthy peasantry, who are the seminary of the state; and whoever neglects this duty, and holds land for the mere purpose of collecting as much rent as possible in the easiest possible way, is a bad landlord and a worthless citizen. How far by any legal enactment it would be wise or practicable in this country to interfere with the absolute liberty which

proprietors have hitherto enjoyed, of doing what they like with their tenant population, I cannot say; but I know that, according to the law of all sound social organisation, the peasantry of a country has a special right to demand a kindly protection from the Government, and a paternal treatment from the landholder.

In this matter I am neither a speculative reasoner, nor a sentimental sonnetteer. I have traversed the length and breadth of the land, and looked with my own eyes on the districts that have been or might have been depopulated, and hold the opinions which I hold on the subject, no doubt from warm sympathy with the peasantry of my native land in the first place, but certainly from no hostile feeling towards the aristocracy. I am no democrat. I have conversed with persons of all classes, and have come to the conclusion, that from the mingled operation of good and bad motives—as is wont in human affairs—a wrong has been done in this matter—and that instead of a one-sided rage for large farms, and unlimited deer-preserves, the true economical policy of the Highlands consists in the preservation of our local population as a primary object, and that this is best effected by a proper admixture of large farms, farms of medium size, and small crofts, according to situation and circumstances. For any surplus of population beyond this let emigration be applied as the natural remedy. By way of illustration to these principles, I will here mention a single anecdote. I

had the pleasure of being acquainted with a landed proprietor in Skye, a gentleman of great knowledge of the world, and who had a special pleasure—which every landed proprietor should have—in exercising his functions as a bishop of the district in matters secular. Standing with him one forenoon, at the end of one of those sea-lochs so frequent in the Western Highlands, and looking up towards the brow of a hill on my right spotted with small cottages, I said, "Sir, may I take the liberty of asking you two questions with regard to your property in these parts?" "By all means," said he. "Then," continued I, "if you could remove all these small crofters on that slope, and place in their room one big farmer, would you do it?" "Certainly," said he, "I could, but I would not; because I wish to be a king of men, not of mountains merely and of moors." "Very well," said I; "this being so, my second question is, supposing you did turn out all these crofters, as we know that certain great proprietors have done, causing no small outcry in the land, would you be a gainer thereby in a pecuniary point of view?" "Not at all," said he, "rather a loser." From which I drew, and I fancy any impartial person will be ready to draw, the conclusion—that, if not in all cases, certainly in some, the clearance has been caused by the combined operation of an ignorance of economical laws, of an indifference to the happiness of the people, and of a regard to the convenience of the factor or land-

overseer rather than to the true interests of the proprietor. No doubt it is easier to receive £1,000 of rent from one big farmer, then, than to collect the same sum in parts from twenty or thirty, or half-a-hundred small tenants; but it is not, therefore, in any respect more politic, more human, or more wise.

So much for the clearances. I am now glad to be rid of such a slippery subject; and will take a drive or a walk with you, if you please, from Farr Kirk, at the mouth of the Naver, to Thurso. Thence (after you have examined the geological records in the old red flags of the district) a voyage of three hours in the steam mail-packet will bring you to STROMNESS. The commanding object in the passage across the Firth is the island of Hoy (high island), beneath the west side of which the steam-boat passes about half-way to that place. The magnificent cliffs here rise to some twelve hundred feet above the sea-level; and the force of the Atlantic tide has cut them out into various forms of grotesque grandeur, to one of which the popular fancy has given the name of "the Old Man of Hoy." This huge outstanding rock-pillar, presenting in some aspects the rude resemblance of a human figure, is a prominent object to the eye of the pedestrian who walks along the coast of Caithness from Thurso eastward to the world-famous John O'Groat's house. It is seen also in fine relief from the grand cliffs of Marwick, about six miles north of Stromness; and it was here amid the graceful wheel and musical scream

(for a scream may be musical on a wild sea-shore) of clouds of sea-gulls, that I wrote the lines that appear first in my rhymed sketches of Orkney land.

About five or six miles to the east of Stromness, on the Kirkwall road, are the famous standing stones of Stennis (stone-ness), which justly dispute with Stonehenge the palm of so-called Druidical architecture in this British corner of the world. I have visited Stonehenge more than once, and shall certainly visit it again, if opportunity offers; but, while gladly conceding to the English structure the double praise of more gigantic proportions, and more curious skill, I must vindicate for the Orcadian monument the appearance of a more hoar antiquity, and the reality of a more picturesque situation. This picturesqueness arises from the fine interplay of land and water—which is one of the great beauties of Orcadian scenery generally—and at the same time from the distant view of the high mountains of Hoy, which form the background of the picture. I spent part of a fine Sabbath day on the breezy slopes above the loch, on which these time-hallowed monuments stand: and, had I been deeply read in the lore of the old Sagas, and the history of the Scandinavian Jarls, should have been able to produce some verses that might have opened pleasant vistas into the strange historical changes of which these gaunt recorders have for so many centuries been the witnesses. But as it was, I could only give birth to the two sonnets which appear

in the text, a very unworthy tribute indeed to a theme so sublime and so suggestive; but, as I heard two sermons in the kirk of Stennis on the same Sunday, I have no reason to think that upon the whole that day was spent unprofitably.

The standing stones are not the only monuments which enable Stromness to compete with Salisbury in antiquarian interest. Both the English and the Orcadian ground is studded over with green mounds or barrows, whose sepulchral character, from the pages of Homer downwards, is sufficiently attested. Of these mounds by far the most notable is that called Maeshow, rising prominent on the heath at a short distance from the great circle of monoliths, on the left hand of the road to Kirkwall. This mound was formally opened in the year 1861, by Mr. Farrer, late M.P. for Durham; and those discoveries were then made which are described in the verses at p. 70. The rude inscriptions on the walls have been interpreted by Principal Barclay, of Glasgow, and by more than one distinguished foreign archæologist; but as the interpretations do by no means agree, my plain versified narrative tells perhaps as much as can be probably known or usefully imagined on the subject.

The largest of my sketches, p. 60, was written at KIRKWALL, on the slopes of the broad hill, Wideford I think they call it, that rises to the west of the town, and from which there is a fine prospect. Stromness no doubt is the beauty, but Kirkwall is the big wig of

Orkney; and the historical interest of the latter town, attaching to the names of St. Magnus and King Haco, imparts to it a significance to which its fair sister in the west has no pretensions. The cathedral of St. Magnus also is one of the most graceful buildings of the Gothic style in Britain; and the three plane trees before the house of Mr. Heddle, of Melsetter, in a treeless land, are also very delectable. The expedition of Haco, which my ballad records, took place in the year 1263, and is memorable as having given the death-blow to the famous Scandinavian kingdom in the northern and western isles, which lasted for four hundred years, and has left its indelible impress on the race and on the topography of that part of Scotland.

I may add that tourists visiting those parts may supply themselves with the most agreeable of companions in the shape of "Summers and Winters in the Orkneys," by Daniel Gorrie, London, 1868; to which may with great profit be added the reprint of Dr. Barry's "History of the Orkney Islands," published at Kirkwall in 1867; and the translation of the Latin history of Torfæus, by the Rev. Alexander Pope, late minister of Reay, Wick, 1866.

Whither now? You are on the pier of Kirkwall, within 150 miles sail of LERWICK—which is nothing in a steam-boat—and if you do not take a peep of SHETLAND, being here, you are either the most unfortunate or the most pusillanimous of tourists. The

man who has no curiosity to see the end of the world is not worthy to live in the world. I have seen the south end of our British world in Cornwall, and the north end here on the Fuggla rock, at the extreme north-west corner of UNST; and, if I am not partial as a Scot, the north end is vastly the more sublime of the two. Of the many grand panoramic and dioramic spectacles that it has been my fortune to behold on this wonderful earth, there are four that stand out with perennial vividness in my imagination; the well-known view from the Righi in Switzerland; the sudden gleaming apparition of the amphitheatre of frosted granite pinnacles, as the thick mist drew its shroud away from the bosom of the sea of ice at Chamouni; the luminous visions of Ben and Glen, and far water seen through the sweeping mist on the jagged spine of Ben Cruachan; and the graceful tissue of plumy life through which I sailed, under the kindly guidance of the hospitable Edmonston, at BURRA FIORD, in Unst. The song at p. 73 is a literal description of our boating expedition on that occasion; so no word of commentary is required here.

After the natural sublimities of Shetland have been wisely admired, and its social difficulties, as far as may be, sympathetically considered, the tourist who has time to follow my route, will find his way back again, through Kirkwall and Stromness to Thurso; in order that being in this quarter of the world he may not omit a visit to the memorable house of JOHN DE

GROAT, which is the Land's End of Scotland to thousands of visitors, whose circumstances do not permit them to indulge in the flight to uttermost Unst. The walk along the coast, from the city of huge flag-stones to the beach of white pounded shells, is exceeding pleasant. The various outline of the Orcadian coast on the opposite shore presents a fine background; while the breeze that sweeps along the open field and land, and the tide that runs at a portentous rate through the firth, impart a healthy and an exhilarant stimulus. The little inn of HUNA, in the immediate neighbourhood of John o' Groat, where the traveller sleeps the night, is a paradise of perfect peace to whosoever has recently emerged from those overwhelming receptacles for shoals of hastily transmitted individuals, which our railway machinery has called into existence. As to John de Groat's domicile, it is with difficulty that you stumble upon some vestiges of it; that he was a man, and a solid man of flesh and blood, and a Dutchman, occupying at one time a house of solid masonry on this coast, and not a mere myth or allegory, there can be no doubt, whatever Germans or Germanising-English writers, seeking everywhere for Lady Aurora and Dan Phœbus under some strange disguise, may theorize to the contrary; but, whether you find his house or not, if you walk about, a breezy forenoon, along the track of grassy links and snowy beach, from Huna to Duncansby Head, you cannot fail to catch some part of the

pleasant contagion of the picture with which the genius of the place touched me, when rambling in those parts. Some people think there is no beauty in Caithness. I beg leave to differ. I never had a more various and pleasant sea walk than that along the coast from Huna to Wick. WICK itself, indeed, for the mere view-hunter, is by no means an engaging town; but there are notable sights here, also, to men whose eyes have not been narrowly accustomed to one pet line of gazing. In the herring season, the thousand-masted fleet, when it sails forth from the crowded harbour into the wide open sea, in the glow of a bright summer evening, being once seen will never be forgotten; and the flashing dexterity of the toilsome maidens, who perform the necessary function of disembowelling the scaly booty that heaps the pier after the return of the boats in the morning, is truly wonderful. The first railway-car shooting past the slow optics of Dorsetshire or Suffolk peasants, seen for the first time, was not more miraculous. But these things must be seen, not talked about. From Wick, by favour of the old mail-coach—in these regions not yet abolished—passing Dunrobin, the magnificent marine seat of the Duke of Sutherland, we arrive at Golspie; thence the railway transports you, in its usual way of light and nimble unconcern to TAIN, a grey old town, rising gravely above a huge stretch of grey old fen-land, with an air of decadent respectability about it, rather sorrowful—one of those

unfortunate places, once flaunting with purple prosperity, which not even the railway has been able to touch with the whiff of a passing revival. Here, however, if you are wise, you will rest for an hour or two, and seated in the precincts of that old grey chapel beside the fen, indulge in some such mediæval imaginative reveries as haunted me there, till I was startled by the shriek of the railway whistle; and the vision came unhappily—or happily—to a close. The few facts mentioned in these stanzas are taken from an excellent little book of local topography, and may be relied on as giving a true picture of the historical traditions connected with the ruin.

Our next stage is Inverness: a beautiful town, dominating a rich, interesting, and picturesque neighbourhood; but it does not lie in my programme; so I transport you at once to the granite city of Aberdeen; and thence by the clear, rushing waters of the Dee, the warm wooded retreats of Banchory, the dark fir forests of Aboyne, and the fragrant-tressed birches of Balmoral, dear to royalty, we shoot into the very heart of the Highlands again at BRAEMAR. When there, and when you have satiated your eye with the splendid bend of that rare river at Invercauld, you may easily scale the peaks of dark Loch-na-Gar—unless the deer-stalkers attempt to block your way—and enjoy in prospect the whole sweep of the silver stream eastward; or, if you desire a mountain expedition on a larger scale, you will start as early as

possible in the morning, breakfast at the linn of Dee, six miles above Braemar, wind your way through the grand pines of Glen-lui-Beg—a study for Peter Graham or Mr. McWhirter in their best moments—thence up the roaring steep to the dark mountain-girdled Loch Avon (where hardy tourists, beneath a native stone of shelter, pass the night); thence to the broad bare back of BEN MUICDHUI (*black sow*); thence to the adjacent peak of Cairngorm (the dark blue Cairn); and thence down a steep northern gorge of the great Grampian range to Aviemore on the Spey. It is a grand stretch of full forty miles, not to be undertaken rashly and without a fair calculation of your powers. Once on the Spey you will find the rail, and swing down through the MacPherson country to Dalwhinnie; thence, if you choose to follow the track of my rhymes, you must put foot to turf again, and crossing the peat bog below the inn—not an easy operation always—you find yourself at the head of Loch ERICHT, along the west side of which a rough path leads to the muir of RANNOCH (fern-moor), and thence to Loch Rannoch, one of the most pleasant stretches of quiet pastoral mountain mere in Scotland. Proceeding along the south bank of this loch, through the domain of the Robertsons of Strowan, you come out at the east end, into the country where the waters of the Tummel, forcing their way through rough masses of primitive rocks, foam down to and mingle with the Garry, near Killiecrankie. There of course you will

submit yourself to the inspiration of Professor Aytoun, in whose presence I am wisely dumb. Thence, when you have leisurely rambled over the battle field, I wheel you down through the wooded grandeur of Dunkeld, to the fair plain of Perth—a lovely picture set in a lovelier frame—and on to Stirling. You will not fail to understand why I bring you by this route. You must follow my Muse, and I have only two points now remaining on which I hung a light festoon of breezy rhymes as I passed. The first point is BEN LEDI, the graceful peaked mountain which you behold bounding your view westward, as you stand on the high ground at Stirling Castle, taking in the fulness of that grand Alpine picture into your heart. The next point is LOCH LOMOND, unquestionably the queen of Scottish lochs, not only because of its size, but because it is beautiful in its whole length, beautiful above with the luxuriant wildness of the Highlands, beautiful below with the soft graces of the low country. Not few are the happy days that I have spent on the banks of this beautiful sheet of water, in solitary musing, or in company with sagacious old Celts, whose persevering industry and well-directed ambition had raised them to the rank of kings among the merchant princes of the Clyde, or keen-eyed professors of science, who had escaped for a few days from the slavery of lecture-halls and sick-rooms in Edinburgh, to cultivate a grateful sense of freedom, roaring through the freakish sinuosities, or scramb-

ling up the copsy entanglements of this various loch. One of these social days of happy memory I have described in the verses called Edendarach, from which the reader I hope will take the hint, when he is at Rowardennan by no means to omit the ascent of Ben Lomond, a Ben which possesses the double advantage of commanding a splendid prospect and presenting no difficulty of climbing, even to the most feeble and dainty-footed tourist. And, after having completed this ascent the south country tourist may turn his back on the Highlands, well satisfied if he has accomplished with fair favour of the skies, one half or even one third of the ground over which he has accepted my hurried manuduction. And he will return, no doubt also justly, making wise conclusions in favour of his dear old England. "Very fine Bens, these, but bare and barren! a man cannot live on barrenness!" Exactly so. When one thinks of your long stretches of rich fragrant turf in England, where we have only brown moors; of your wide seas of luxuriant leafage, county after county, from east to west, a continuity of gardens and orchards; your soft velvety lawns, the free range of your magnificent parks, studded with aristocratic trees, weighty with the peaceful growth of centuries; your trim cottages, hanging on the rim of ivied cliff, or rising terrace above terrace from the bottom of your vivid green dales; your venerable and tasteful mansions, hereditary homes of all that is most sound-hearted and

most lovely in English life; your perpetual air of cleanness, and comfort, and shining prosperity—we willingly concede to you the privilege of boasting that you live in the finest country in the world. Thank God, therefore, in the first place, that you were born in England; but thank Him, also, in the second place, that you will die one day, having seen Scotland. As for us, meagre mountaineers, we shall continue, with God's grace, to make the best of our granite rocks, and our heather braes, turning our physical disadvantages, if we are wise, into the means of strengthening our character; for man is an animal, easily spoiled by much softness, and from whom a little hardness will often help to evolve a more firmly braced manhood. Remember that.

LAYS OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS.

IONA.

THE VOYAGE OF COLUMBA:

I.

"Son of Brendan, I have willed it;
I will leave this land and go
To a land of savage mountains,
Where the Borean breezes blow;
To a land of rainy torrents,
And of barren, treeless isles,
Where the winter frowns are lavish,
And the summer scantly smiles;
I will leave this land of bloodshed,
Where fierce brawls and battles sway,
And will preach God's peaceful Gospel
In a grey land, far away."

Beathan spake, the son of Brendan—
"Son of Phelim, art thou wise?
Wilt thou change the smiling Erin,
For the scowling Pictish skies?
Thou, the lealest son of Erin,
Thou, a prince of royal line,
Sprung by right descent from mighty
Neill, whose hostages were nine?
Wilt thou seek the glens of Albyn,
For repose from loveless strife?
Glens, where feuds, from sire to grandson,
Fan the wasteful flame of life?
Wilt thou leave a land of learning,
Home of ancient holy lore,
To converse with uncouth people,
Fishing on a shelvy shore?
Wilt thou leave the homes of Gartan,
Where thou suck'd the milky food
From the mother-breast of Aithne,
Daughter of Lagenian blood?
Wilt thou leave the oaks of Derry,
Where each leaf is dear to thee,
Wandering, in a storm-tost wherry,

O'er the wide, unpastured sea?
Son of Phelim, Beathan loves thee,
Be thou zealous, but be wise!
There be heathens here in Erin;
Preach to them 'neath kindly skies."
Then the noble son of Phelim,
With the big tear in his eye,
To the blameless son of Brendan
Firmly thus made swift reply—
"Son of Brendan, I have heard thee,
Heard thee with a bleeding heart;
For I love the oaks of Derry,
And to leave them gives me smart;
But the ban of God is on me,
Not my will commands the way;
Molaise priest of Innishmurry
Hights me go, and I obey.
For their death is heavy on me
Whom I slew in vengeful mood,
At the battle of Culdremhne,
In the hotness of my blood.
For the lord that rules at Tara,
In some brawl that grew from wine,

Slew young Carnan, branch of promise,
And a kinsman of my line;
And the human blood within me
Mounted, and my hand did slay,
For the fault of one offender
Many on that tearful day;
And I soil'd the snow-white vestment
With which Etchen, holy man,
Clonfad's mitred elder, clad me
When I join'd the priestly clan;
And my soul was rent with anguish,
And my sorrows were increased,
And I went to Innishmurry,
Seeking solace from the priest.
And the saintly Molaise told me—
'For the blood that thou hast spilt,
God hath shown me one atonement
To make clear thy soul from guilt;
Count the hundreds of the Christians
Whom thy sword slew to thy blame,
Even so many souls of heathens
Must thy word with power reclaim;
Souls of rough and rude sea-rovers,

Used to evil, strange to good,
Picts beyond the ridge of Albyn,
In the Pagan realm of Brude.'
Thou hast heard me, son of Brendan;
I have will'd it; and this know,
Thou with me, or I without thee,
On this holy hest will go!"
Beathan heard, with meek agreement,
For he knew that Colum's will,
Like a rock against the ocean,
Still was fix'd for good or ill.
"Son of Phelim, I have heard thee;
I and Cobhtach both will go,
Past the wintry ridge of Albyn,
O'er the great sea's foamy flow;
Far from the green oaks of Derry,
Where the cuckoo sings in May,
From the land of falling waters
Far, and clover's green display;
Where Columba leads we follow,
Fear with him I may not know,
Where the God thou servest calls thee,
Son of Phelim, I will go."

" II.

" Son of Brendan, I am ready ;
Is the boat all staunch and trim ?
Light our osier craft and steady,
Like an ocean gull to swim ?
I have cast all doubt behind me,
Seal'd with prayer my holy vow,
And the God who heard me answers
With assuring presence now."
And the son of Brendan answer'd—
" Son of Phelim, thou shalt be
Like God's angel-guidance to us
As we plough the misty sea.
We are ready, I and Cobhtach,
Diarmid in thy service true,
Rus and Fechno, sons of Rodain,
Scandal, son of Bresail, too ;
Ernan, Luguid Mocatheimne,
Echoid, and Tochannu brave,
Grillan and the son of Branduh,
Brush with thee the briny wave."
Thus spake he ; Columba lifted

High his hand to bless the wherry,
And they oar'd with gentle oarage
From the dear-loved oaks of Derry;
Loath to leave each grassy headland,
Shiny beach and pebbly bay,
Thymy slope and woody covert,
Where the cuckoo hymn'd the May;
Loath from some familiar cabin's
Wreathy smoke to rend their eye,
Where a godly widow harbour'd
Laughing girl or roguish boy.
On they oar'd, and soon behind them
Left thy narrow pool, Loch Foyle,
And the grey sea spread before them
Many a broad unmeasured mile.
Swiftly now on bounding billow
On they run before the gale,
For a strong south-wester blowing
Strain'd the bosom of their sail.
On they dash! the Rhinns of Islay
Soon they reach, and soon they pass;
Cliff and bay, and bluffy foreland,
Flit as in a magic glass.

What is this before them rising
Northward from the foamy spray?
Land, I wis—an island lorded
By the wise Macneill to-day,
Then a brown and barren country,
Cinctured by the ocean grey.*
On they scud; and there they landed,
And they mounted on a hill,
Whence the far-viewed son of Brendan
Look'd, and saw green Erin still.
"Say'st thou so, thou son of Brendan?"
Quoth Columba; "then not here
May we rest from tossing billow
With light heart and conscience clear,
Lest our eyes should pine a-hunger
For the land we hold so dear,
And our coward keel returning
Stint the vow that brought us here."
So they rose and trimmed their wherry,
And their course right on they hold
Northward, where the wind from Greenland

* The island of Colonsay, south of Mull, from which the present Lord Colonsay takes his title.

Blows on Albyn clear and cold;
When, behold, a cloud came darkling
From the west, with gusty blore,
And the horrent waves rose booming
Eastward, with ill-omen'd roar;
And the night came down upon them,
And the sea with yeasty sweep
Hiss'd around them, as the wherry
Stagger'd through the fretted deep.
Eastward, eastward, back they hurried,
For to face the flood was vain,
Every rib of their light wherry
Creaking to the tempest's strain;
Eastward, eastward, till the morning
Glimmer'd through the pitchy storm,
And reveal'd the frowning Scarba,
And huge Jura's cones enorm.
"Blessed God," cried now Columba,
"Here, indeed, may danger be
From the mighty whirl and bubble
Of the cauldron of the sea;
Here it was that noble Breacan
Perish'd in the gulfing wave—

Here we, too, shall surely perish,
If not God be quick to save!"
Spake: and with his hand he lifted
High the cross above the brine;
And he cried, "Now, God, I thank Thee
Thou hast sent the wished-for sign!
For, behold, thou son of Brendan,
There upon the topmost wave,
Sent from God, a sign to save us
Float the bones of Breacan brave!
And his soul this self-same moment,
From the girth of purging fire,
Leaps redeem'd, as we are 'scaping
From the huge sea-cauldron dire."
Spake: and to the name of Breacan
Droop'd the fretful-crested spray;
And full soon a mild south-easter
Blew the surly storm away.*

* The legend about the bones of Breacan is of course taken from the old Latin book, otherwise it had no title to be here. In Gaelic, the first element of the compound word *corryvreckan* means a *cauldron*, and the other element *breac* means *spotted*: so that etymologically the name seems only to mean the whirl or cauldron of the sea spotted with foam.

III.

Little now remains to tell ye,
Gentles, of great Phelim's son;
How he clave the yielding billow
Till Iona's strand he won.
Back they steer'd, still westward, westward;
Past the land where high Ben More
Nods above the isles that quaintly
Fringe its steep and terraced shore.
On they cut—still westward! westward!
On with favouring wind and tide,
Past the pillar'd crags of Carsaig
Fencing Mull's sun-fronting side,
Pass the narrow Ross, far-stretching
Where the rough and ruddy rocks
Rudely rise in jumbled hummocks
Of primeval granite blocks;
Till they come to where Iona
Rears her front of hoary crags,
Fenced by many a stack and skerry
Full of rifts, and full of jags;
And behind a small black islet

Through an inlet's narrow space,
Sail'd into a bay white bosom'd,
In the island's southward face.
Then with eager step they mounted
To the high rock's beetling brow—
"Canst thou see, thou far-view'd Beathan,
Trace of lovely Erin now?"
"No! thou son of Phelim, only
Mighty Jura's Paps I see,
These and Isla's Rhynns, but Erin
Southward lies in mist from me."
"Thank thee, God!" then cried Columba;
"Here our vows are paid, and here
We may rest from tossing billow,
With light heart and conscience clear."
Downward then their way they wended
To the pure and pebbly bay,
And, with holy cross uplifted,
Thus did saintly Colum say—
"In the sand we now will bury
This trim craft that brought us here,
Lest we think on oaks of Derry,
And the land we hold so dear;

Then they dug a trench, and sank it
In the sand, to seal their vow,
With keel upwards, as who travels
In the sand may see it now.

THE DEATH OF COLUMBA.

Saxon stranger, thou did'st wisely,
Sunder'd for a little space
From that motley stream of people
Drifting by this holy place;
With the furnace and the funnel
Through the long sea's glancing arm,
Let them hurry back to Oban,
Where the tourist loves to swarm.
Here, upon this hump of granite,
Sit with me a quiet while,
And I'll tell thee how Columba
Died upon this old grey isle.

I.

'Twas in May, a breezy morning,
When the sky was fresh and bright,
And the broad blue ocean shimmer'd
With a thousand gems of light.

On the green and grassy Machar,
Where the fields are spredden wide,
And the crags in quaint confusion
Jut into the Western tide:
Here his troop of godly people,
In stout labour's garb array'd,
Blithe their fruitful task were plying
With the hoe and with the spade.
"I will go and bless my people,"
Quoth the father, "ere I die,
But the strength is slow to follow
Where the wish is swift to fly;
I am old and feeble, Diarmid,
Yoke the oxen, be not slow,
I will go and bless my people,
Ere from earth my spirit go."
On his ox-drawn wain he mounted,
Faithful Diarmid by his side;
Soon they reach'd the grassy Machar,
Soft and smooth, Iona's pride;
"I am come to bless my people,
Faithful fraters, ere I die;
I had wish'd to die at Easter,

But I would not mar your joy,
Now the Master plainly calls me,
Gladly I obey his call;
I am ripe, I feel the sickle,
Take my blessing ere I fall."
But they heard his words with weeping,
And their tears fell on the dew,
And their eyes were dimmed with sorrow,
For they knew his words were true.
Then he stood up on the waggon,
And his prayerful hands he hove,
And he spake and bless'd the people
With the blessing of his love:
"God be with you, faithful fraters,
With you now, and evermore;
Keep you from the touch of evil,
On your souls his Spirit pour;
God be with you, fellow-workmen,
And from loved Iona's shore
Keep the blighting breath of demons,
Keep the viper's venom'd store!"
Thus he spake, and turn'd the oxen
Townwards; sad they went, and slow,

And the people, fix'd in sorrow,
Stood, and saw the father go.

II.

List me further, Saxon stranger,
Note it nicely, by the causeway
On the left hand, where thou came
With the motley tourist people,
Stands a cross of figured fame.
Even now thine eye may see it,
Near the nunnery, slim and grey ;—
From the waggon there Columba
Lighted on that tearful day,
And he sat beneath the shadow
Of that cross, upon a stone,
Brooding on his speedy passage
To the land where grief is none ;
When, behold, the mare, the white one
That was wont the milk to bear
From the dairy to the cloister,
Stood before him meekly there,
Stood, and softly came up to him,
And with move of gentlest grace

O'er the shoulder of Columba
Thrust her piteous-pleading face,
Look'd upon him as a friend looks
On a friend that goes away,
Sunder'd from the land that loves him
By wide seas of briny spray.
"Fie upon thee for thy manners!"
Diarmid cried with lifted rod,
"Wilt thou with untimely fondness
Vex the prayerful man of God?"
"Not so, Diarmid," cried Columba;
"Dost thou see the speechful eyne
Of the fond and faithful creature
Sorrow'd with the swelling brine?
God hath taught the mute unreasoning
What thou fail'st to understand,
That this day I pass for ever
From Iona's shelly strand.
Have my blessing, gentle creature,
God doth bless both man and beast;
From hard yoke, when I shall leave thee,
Be thy faithful neck released."
Thus he spoke, and quickly rising

With what feeble strength remain'd,
Leaning on stout Diarmid's shoulder,
A green hillock's top he gained.
There, or here where we are sitting,
Whence his eye might measure well
Both the cloister and the chapel,
And his pure and prayerful cell.
There he stood, and high uplifting
Hands whence flowed a healing grace,
Breathed his latest voice of blessing
To protect the sacred place,—
Spake such words as prophets utter
When the veil of flesh is rent,
And the present fades from vision,
On the germing future bent:
"God thee bless, thou loved Iona,
Though thou art a little spot,
Though thy rocks are grey and treeless,
Thine shalt be a boastful lot;
Thou shalt be a sign for nations;
Nurtured on thy sacred breast,
Thou shalt send on holy mission
Men to teach both East and West;

Peers and potentates shall own thee,
Monarchs of wide-sceptre'd sway
Dying shall beseech the honour
To be tomb'd beneath thy clay;
God's dear saints shall love to name thee,
And from many a storied land
Men of clerkly fame shall pilgrim
To Iona's little strand."

III.

Thus the old man spake his blessing;
Then, where most he loved to dwell,
Through the well-known porch he enter'd
To his pure and prayerful cell;
And then took the holy psalter—
'Twas his wont when he would pray—
Bound with three stout clasps of silver,
From the casket where it lay;
There he read with fixed devoutness,
And with craft full fair and fine,
On the smooth and polish'd vellum
Copied forth the sacred line,
Till he came to where the kingly

Singer sings in faithful mood,
How the younglings of the lion
Oft may roam in vain for food,
But who fear the Lord shall never
Live and lack their proper good.*
Here he stopped, and said, "My latest
Now is written; what remains
I bequeath to faithful Beathan
To complete with pious pains.
Then he rose, and in the chapel
Conned the pious vesper song
Inly to himself, for feeble
Now the voice that once was strong;
Hence with silent step returning
To his pure and prayerful cell,
On the round smooth stone he laid him
Which for pallet served him well.
Here some while he lay; then rising,
To a trusty brother said:
"Brother, take my parting message,
Be my last words wisely weigh'd.
'Tis an age of brawl and battle;

* Psalm xxxiv. 10.

Men who seek not God to please,
With wild sweep of lawless passion
Waste the land and scourge the seas.
Not like them be ye; be loving,
Peaceful, patient, truthful, bold,
But in service of your Master
Use no steel and seek no gold."
Thus he spake; but now there sounded
Through the night the holy bell
That to Lord's-day matins gather'd
Every monk from every cell.
Eager at the sound, Columba
In the way foresped the rest,
And before the altar kneeling,
Pray'd with hands on holy breast.
Diarmid followed; but a marvel
Flow'd upon his wondering eyne,—
All the windows shone with glorious
Light of angels in the shrine.
Diarmid enter'd; all was darkness.
"Father!" But no answer came.
"Father! art thou here, Columba?"
Nothing answer'd to the name.

Soon the troop of monks came hurrying,
Each man with a wandering light,
For great fear had come upon them,
And a sense of strange affright.
"Diarmid! Diarmid! is the father
With thee? Art thou here alone?"
And they turn'd their lights and found him
On the pavement lying prone.
And with gentle hands they raised him,
And he mildly look'd around,
And he raised his arm to bless them,
But it dropped upon the ground;
And his breathless body rested
On the arms that held him dear,
And his dead face look'd upon them
With a light serene and clear;
And they said that holy angels
Surely hover'd round his head,
For alive no loveliest ever
Look'd so lovely as this dead.

Stranger, thou hast heard my story,
Thank thee for thy patient ear;

We are pleased to stir the sleeping
Memory of old greatness here.
I have used no gloss, no varnish,
To make fair things fairer look;
As the record stands, I give it,
In the old monks' Latin book.
Keep it in thy heart, and love it,
Where a good thing loves to dwell;
It may help thee in thy dying,
If thou care to use it well.

SONNETS.

I.

THE TOURISTS.

WHAT brought them here across the briny pool,
A motley train of high and low degree,
Grave seniors, girls whose blue eyes flash with glee,
White-collar'd priests, and boys uncaged from school?
I know not—happy if themselves can tell;
No sights are here to trap the vulgar eye,
No dome whose gilded cross invades the sky,
No palace where wide-sceptred Cæsars dwell.
An old grey chapel on an old grey beach,
Grey waste of rocks unpictured by a tree,
And far as hungry vision's range can reach,
The old grey mist upon the old grey sea:
These shows for sense; but the deep truth behind
They only know who read the mind with mind.

II.

THE ROYAL SAINT.

PRAISE me no Cæsars, Alexanders, all
Who whet sharp swords to reap great names in story,
Napoleons, Fredericks, men who fill the hall
Of fame with echoes which the French call glory!
True glory he reap'd with his saintly band
Who fled from pomp of courts and flash of spears,
To win lost souls on this storm-batter'd strand,
With loving venture, prayers, and precious tears.
No herald shrill'd sharp fear his path before,
No wasteful fire made deserts where he came,
No trail of victories sign'd his march with gore,
No dinsome triumph peal'd his dreaded name;
But shod with peace, and wing'd with fervour, he
Unlock'd all hearts; for Love gave him the key.

III.

THE LORD'S DAY IN IONA.

PURE worshipper, who on this holy day
Would'st shake thee free from soul-encrusting cares,
And to the great Creator homage pay
In some high fane most worthy of thy prayers,
Go not where sculptured tower or pictured dome
Invites the reeking city's jaded throngs,
Some hoar old shrine of Rhine-land or of Rome,
Where the dim aisle the languid hymn prolongs;
Here rather follow me, and take thy stand
By the grey cairn that crowns the lone Dun Ee,
And let thy breezy worship be the grand
Old Bens, and old grey knolls that compass thee,
The sky-blue waters, and the snow-white sand,
And the quaint aisles far-sown upon the sea.

IV.

MOONLIGHT.

THOU mystic moon that o'er the dim grey sound
Ray'st forth a yellow stream of thin cold light,
If aught thou hast of knowledge more profound
That told might profit bring to mortal wight,
Tell me: if not, why should I rack my wit
To shape me what thou art, or whither bound,
Or what strange souls, for fleshly coil unfit
Find a meet lodgment on thy spotted round?
Dream dreams who will beneath the glimmering moons,
And commune with dim ghosts that flit about,
I have no brains to waste on hazy runes,
That being read but stir more doubtful doubt;
Shine on me, Sun! beneath thy clear strong ray
To live and work is all the bliss I pray.

V

THE BOULDER.

WHENCE comest thou? The rest are black, but thou
Art rough and red as any Roy MacGregor,
And show'st as strangely on this spot, I vow,
As in white Washington a sooty nigger!
Say, wert thou roll'd o'er from the ruddy Ross
By Noah's flood, when God was wroth with men,
Or, when the giants played at pitch and toss
Wert thou the counter for their gambling then?
I know not: but what men who read the rocks
Propound, that Nature in her crude display
Of Titan strength with blocks high-heap'd on blocks
Made glorious sport, before Sire Adam's day,
May well be true; and, when the young sun shone,
Some travelling iceberg dropped this mighty stone.

VI.

THE DISAPPOINTED TOURIST.

And is this all? And I have seen the whole,
Cathedral, chapel, nunnery, and graves!
'Tis scantly worth the tin, upon my soul,
Or the long travel through the tumbling waves!
There's nothing now, but to sit down and smoke
A pipe on this grey channel's shelving brink.
"There you are right," quoth I, to him who spoke,
"Not much is here to see, but much to think;
If you'll but sit and read the old monk's book,
Making the shifting shows of time your theme,
And through the haze of centuries brooding look
Till cunning Fancy shape the featured dream,
Then learn what men served God in this lone nook
Nobly, without gas, newspapers, or steam."

MULL.

A PSALM OF BEN MORE.

How beautiful upon the mountains, Lord,
Is Earth, thy world, how beautiful and grand!
Ofttimes with firm unwearied foot I clomb
The old grey Ben, whose peak serene look'd down
In glory on the light careering clouds
That swept the nearer heights; but never fill'd
My wondering eye such pomp of various view
As now, from thy storm-shatter'd brow, Ben More.
How fearful from this high sharp-riven rim
To look down thy precipitous forehead seam'd
With scars from countless storms, whence to the plain
In long grim lines the livid ruin falls,
And think how with a touch the involving blast
From the rude North might seize such thing as I,
And whirl me into dust in that black glen,

Sown with destruction! But such danger now
Touches not me, when in her gentle mood
Nature, all robed in light, and shod with peace,
Upon the old foundations of her strength
Sits like a queen. How glorious in the West
The sheen of ocean lies, the boundless breadth
Of gleaming waves that girdle in the globe
With their untainted virtue, strangely cut
By rocky terraces projecting far
In measured tiers, and long-drawn sprawling arms
Of huge-slabbed granite huddled into knobs,
And studded, far as the rapt eye can reach,
With isle and islet sown in sportive strength,
Even as the sky with stars—the sandy Coll
Tiree-tway-parted, and the nearer group
Of Ulva, Gometra, and Lunga's isle,
And the flat Pladda, and the steep Cairnburg,
Where erst the Norseman, monarch of the main,
His sea-girt castle kept; and stout Maclean
Cromwell's harsh might defied, and planted proud
The flag of Charles, and on the ill-starred clans
Brought loss and harm, and crown'd authority's
Retributive mace. But chiefly, thy dark mass

Enchains my view, in pillared beauty rare,
World-famous Staffa, by the dædal hand
Of Titan Nature piled in rhythmic state,
A fane for gods, and with the memory wreathed
Of Fingal, and the ancient hero-kings
Whom Ossian sang to the wild ringing notes
Of his old Celtic harp, when Celtic songs
Were mighty in the land, and stirred the soul
Of generous clanship in the men who strode
Their native hills with pride, a prosperous race,
Now few and poor by Saxon lords controlled,
Shorn of their glens, and dwindling fast away
Into a name. Nor less thy old grey line,
Iona, holds my gaze, where late I trod
The grave of kings, and by the figured cross
Stood reverent, raised by grateful piety
To the adventurous Saint, who launched his bark
From Erin's clerkly shore, nor looked behind,
Till he had made that harsh grey rock a school
For gentleness and tenderness and truth
And Gospel charms to tame mistempered souls
Through all the savage North. Hence veering round
Southward, Cantire's long arm, and Islay's heights

And lofty Jura's towering tops stand out
Majestic, and the quaint green-vested knolls
Of sheep-cropped Lorn, and Oban's quiet bay
Beloved of boats. And with more distant sweep
Eastward the strong sky-cleaving Grampians rise
From Arroquhar's heights to Cruachan's shapely peaks
And Buchaill's fair green cone, and thy huge bulk
Broad-breasted Nevis, and the mighty host
Of granite battlements that look sternly out
On savage Skye, and with her stiffly bear
The cuffs and buffets of the strong-armed blast
From the still-vexed Atlantic, mother of rains.
These be thy ramparts, Scotland, these the fence
Which Nature raised, to keep thy children free
From the invading Roman, and the pride
Of power aggressive. O! how lovely sleeps
The Sun upon each soft green-mantled glen,
By those grim bulwarks shielded, where the smoke
From lonely hut in odorous birchen bower
Signs the abode of men, the healthful home
Whence breezy Scotland sends her hardy sons
Far-venturing o'er the globe, to win much gold,
And fair approval, and high-throned command,

And all that Earth, a willing tribute, yields
To patient thought, strong will, prompt hand, and grasp
Tenacious. Nor the fervid spirit here
Fails, that beneath a cool impassive front
Nurses the sacred flame, which bursts with power
From Caledonian pulpits, strong to wake
The sting of conscience in lethargic souls
Long drugged to drowsy dullness, or enthralled
By base convention.

But I feel the keen
Uncustomed temper of the thin clear air
On this dry peak, where no hot steams are bred,
Creep with a gradual chillness through my frame;
And I must leave thy tale, thou mighty Ben,
Half sung: nor mine, in sooth, the learned skill
To chronicle the story of thy birth
Portentous; then when God's high call redeemed
The elements from chaos, and made Earth
Start from the seas, and bade the mountains rise
With giant fronts star-threatening, and deep glens
Sundered from glens, and mighty plains from plains
Remotely cast, abode with skill prepared
By toilsome Nature's patient alchemy

For man, proud flower and fruitage of her growth.
These grey-blue rocks in shattered fragments strewn
Upon thy aged crown, if they could speak,
Would tell a tale that science tempts in vain
With many a lofty guess, and name the hour
When the same chemic fire that smelts the bowels
Of hot Vesuvius, 'neath her rocky ribs
Mother of fertile ashes, heaved thy cones
From the tremendous depths of boiling seas
With subterranean thunders terrible,
And tremulous quakings of the tortured Earth
In her primeval throes; and say what tribes
Of monsters then first crawled in slimy beds
Unshapely, or with hideous flapping vans
Clove the thick air, and glared with great round eyes
Through the gross mists, that from the labouring Earth
Rose feverous. Thus stirred by Titan force
Sprang proud Ben More to being, what long space
Of centuried ages, ere sire Adam first
Greeted with glad surprise the genial day
I know not, nor much reck. Enough that here,
Last product of the slow-creating years,

Victors we stand, upon so vast a stage,
Where human work well linked to work divine
Creates new wonders daily; I'm content.
Let others probe the immense of Possibles
With proud conjectures, stamping with the seal
Of sacred truth each darling notion bred
Of green conceit, and plumed with windy pride;
Such fair fantastic triumphs I forego,
Sober to seek, and diligent to do
My human work in this my human plot
Of God's vast garden, all my joy to pluck
The noisome weeds, and rear the fragrant rose,
Not quarreling with its thorn.—Now fare thee well
Thou far-viewed Ben! and may the memoried pomp
Of thy great grandeur make my smallness great,
That in the strait and choking times of life
I still may wear thy presence in my soul,
And walk as in a kingly hall, hung round
With living pictures from the proud Ben More
Monarch of Mull, the fairest isle that spreads
Its green folds to the Sun in Celtic seas.

THE DUKE'S RETREAT.

FAREWELL the city's dust and din,
The laboured pomp, the splendid rattle,
The war without, the fret within,
The ceaseless tug of selfish battle!
I'll toss no more on seas of strife;
But, drifting to a lonely shore,
I'll slip into a peaceful life
Beneath the shade of dark Ben More.

Green is Ben Tealladh's steepy side,
And soft the plash of waters sounding,
Where fair Loch Baa outspreads her pride,
With fringe of leafy trees surrounding:
There would I lie in careless ease,
Stretched on the green and grassy shore,
And nurse mild musings to the breeze
That pipes around the dark Ben More.

What though the dress of state be far—
Vain show to shallow thought appealing—
The crown, the coronet, and star—
The bait that lures the vulgar feeling!
Here, of all cumbrous trappings bare,
I wisely use my native store
Of happy thoughts and fancies fair
Beneath the shade of dark Ben More.

The brae, the billow, and the breeze,
Feed Meditation's quiet rapture;
Or from the scriptured rock at ease
I spell Creation's natal chapter.
The white mist folds its gentle wings
Around the green hill's summit hoar,
And all the power of growing things
Breathes fragrance down from huge Ben More.

And when I wish to rouse the brain
From Contemplation's dreamy pillow,
I strive with artful fly to gain
The speckled swimmer from the billow.

And in my rocking boat I sit,
With busy wand and lazy oar,
While shadows o'er the dark waves flit
From the broad brow of huge Ben More.

Or, where the stag climbs there climb I,
And where the noon-day cloud floats lightly,
Number the green isles as they lie
On the broad ocean glancing brightly;
And note Iona's sacred strand,
Where Erin's venturous saint of yore,
With prayerful heart and sleepless hand,
Tamed the wild Heathens of Ben More.

And when the black squall from the hills
Bristles the soft lake to a Fury,
And down the steep the gathered rills,
Swelled to a torrent, madly hurry;
Then round the cheerly blazing fire
Flies the quick jest and merry roar,
The louder for the tempest's ire
That frowns on us from dark Ben More.

And thus I woo my Autumn ease,
From intrigue far, and wordy squabble
Of men, who vainly fret to please
The whim of the unreasoned rabble.
From courts and kings and camps aloof,
Upon a mountain-girdled shore,
I lurk beneath a lowly roof
At the green base of dark Ben More.

SONNETS.

I.

BEN TEALLADH.

As sits a queen among her maids, so thou,
Ben Tealladh, mid thy cirque of subject hills,
Crowned not with mortal gold, but on thy brow
With deathless verdure fresh from sky-born rills.
Thou fairest vestal of the Western isles,
Hath no bard yet linked thee to famous lays;
And was it left for me to wander miles
And mar thy beauty with imperfect praise?
Come from your dim abodes, all men who pine
In grimy chambers and dark inky dens,
And look, and love this Queen of verdurous Bens!
Trust me, the primal father of our line
Saw no such Ben, from Eden's flowery girth,
To feed his eyes with wonder at his birth.

II.

LOCH BAA.

Lovely Loch Baa, had I, who spend my span
In the hot pressure of a feverish time,
Been born to tell my beads to churchly chime,
When life was tempered to a prayerful plan,
Here I had thatched my hut, secure of peace
By the strong cincture of thy grassy hills,
And by the vow whose chastening virtue kills
Ambition, that makes cankering cares increase;
But sith I am the man I am, and where
The Fate me planted, and the Will divine,
I may but greet thee with a chance-breathed prayer
And seal my homage with one loyal line—
If heaven be fairer than thou art this day
I know not, but with thee I'd rather stay.

III.

LOCH BAA: AGAIN.

"Lovely Loch Baa!" so said I yesterday,
Cradled and curtained by the soft green hills,
As on thy sloping beach I twined my lay
To the low murmur of thy tinkling rills.
But now, O Heavens, what gusty horror swells
Thy face, what blackness crowns thy fretful brow!
And, like a rout of demons from thy dells,
What battling blasts come headlong charging now!
How changed, and yet the same! how strange, and yet
How common! Nature hates perdurant peace,
And in the strife which winds and waves beget
From sweet somniferous sameness finds release;
Then marvel not, nor deem the times ajar,
If Celt with Teut, or Teut with Celt make war!

IV.

FAREWELL TO LOCH BAA.

FAREWELL, Loch Baa! the summer's gone, and I
Must go with it; thy heavens are dark and drear,
And the sad coronach of the widowed year,
With many a mournful groan and solemn sigh,
Trails through thy glens. Beneath sweet summer skies
Each delicate hue, each fair fine-shadowed form
Lived on thy face; but now the pitiless storm
Rakes thee with gashes, and thy beauty dies.
Farewell! Grief comes to all. I must depart.
Not even the gods may stop the wheels of change;
Thou hast the better half of my poor heart
Which loves thy bound, more than wide Nature's range.
Roll swift, ye murky months, whose cruel law
Takes light from Earth, and me from dear Loch Baa!

V.

BEN GREIG.

WHY climb the mountains? I will tell thee why,
And, if my fancy jumps not with thy whim,
What marvel? there is scope beneath the sky
For things that creep, and fly, and walk, and swim.
I love the free breath of the broad-wing'd breeze,
I love the eye's free sweep from craggy rim;
I love the free bird poised at lofty ease,
And the free torrent's far-upsounding hymn;
I love to leave my littleness behind,
In the low vale where little cares are great,
And in the mighty map of things to find
A sober measure of my scanty state,
Taught by the vastness of God's pictured plan
In the big world how small a thing is man!

VI.

MULL WEATHER.

WEATHER!—why blame the weather? on the mountains
Storm with the sunshine weaves the shifting show,
While from the green braes leap the white-maned fountains
With lusty bicker to the vale below.
I'd have him whipt back to the reeking town,
Lord of some breezeless garret in the mews,
Who ducks for shelter when the rain comes down,
And picks his dainty path with shining shoes.
Not so old Ossian, Celtic bard sublime,
Who loved the floating mist and sailing gloom,
And the swoln ocean-wave's far-murmuring boom,
And in the hall of heroes piled a rhyme,
Which on some battered peak a man shall sing,
High-perched beneath the Eagle's stormy wing.

THE RUINED CLACHAN.

At Tobermory, o'er the hills
I wandered, when the noon was sunny,
Through oozy bogs and trickling rills,
And hum of bees that roamed for honey.
I wound my way through ferny maze,
A light and random path pursuing,
Till in the glen there met my gaze
A clump of cottages in ruin.

My heart grew sad, my heart grew warm,
The tears adown my cheeks came rolling,
And in my breast there rose a storm
That kicked at reason's cold controlling.
Full in my thought there flashed to view
The rare old life that here had vanished,
The lusty thew, the heart so true,
The love, the joy, the manhood banished!

Who drove them hence, O who was he
Of hoarded rents a stern exactor,
A titled loon of high degree,
Close-fisted laird, or hard-faced factor?
I may not know: but I disburse
My bile on him, that ruthless actor,
And curse him with a hearty curse,
Close-fisted laird or hard-faced factor.

Yes, cursed be he, and cursed be all
Who live for gold and counted pennies,
Selling their souls to Satan's thrall,
Who hooks his prey with glancing guineas,
Who cheats the eye with glittering gains,
The painted pomp of life bestowing,
But leaves the blood within thy veins
With frosted fountain feebly flowing.

And curst be all who keep the Bens
For sheep and antlered rangers only,
And leave the green and sheltered glens
All houseless, tenantless, and lonely;

Who love no men, who rear no race
To serve their country, when we need them,
Who for the land that knows their face
Will draw the sacred sword of freedom!

If I had land, as I have none,
The people round me I would gather,
And every lad I'd call my son,
And every lass should call me father;
And to each kilted cotter I
Would say, with word so kind and clannish
God bless you all to multiply,
And Earth with Celtic seed replenish!

But I'm just what I am; and so
Will cease to dream of what I might be:
From right beginning all did flow,
And in the end all things will right be.
A human tear is all I can,
A human curse, though scarcely civil,
A tear for all the oppressed of man,
A curse for all that serve the devil!

SKYE.

BLAVEN.

Blow wildly blasts round Blaven's jagged crown,
And through sheer-yawning rifts
Whistle and shriek, while the swift Cloud swoops down,
And like a wild beast lifts
Wrathful his sweeping tail! Scowl, Blaven, scowl
Black as black hell, and, while
Deep in the cauldroned corry tempests growl,
With thy gigantic pile
Stand firm, and harshly scamed with gritty scars
Thy stern-indented face,
Display, defiant of all windy wars
With savage grim grimace,
While countless winters roll. I can rejoice
Where battling blasts increase,

And from the harsh bray of the tempest's voice
Can syllable sweet peace.
To-morrow, when the storm's hot puffing fit
Hath blown itself to rest,
A little child leading a lamb might sit
Harmless upon thy crest.
Oft have I seen Coruisk's dark-rounded lake,
That, like a hell-pot lies
Brewing commotion, sudden radiance take
From the discurtained skies,
And like a cushioned and a cradled thing
With beauty dimpled o'er,
Lie wreathed in lazy smiles, feeble to fling
One ripple to the shore.
There is a soul in Nature that delights
In peace; and peaceful moods,
Which still she finds from every storm that smites
The Bens, or shakes the woods;
A Sabbath tune she hath which most she loves,
And to herself doth sing
Secure, behind the crash of rended groves
And clang of winter's wing.
Such Sabbath tune the wise man's heart doth know

Through all the week day din,
And raptured hears the heavenly cadence flow
Of angel songs within,
What time Rebellion sets the state ajar
And Chaos conquers Law,
And on life's squandered fountains hungry War
Engluts his tiger-maw.
Terrific now the rainful power streams down
And with tremendous flail
Lashes thy battered ribs, and rifted crown,
In adamantine mail
Prodigious cased: the sudden torrent swells
Huge from its birth, and pours
With arrowy force into the sounding dells
Thy ruin's crumbled stores
Precipitous, and spreads the plain below
With slime and fertile dust,
Thy spoil, the soil for gentle life to grow
From thy obdurate crust.
Thus the harsh-blustering storm prepares the path
For plough and peaceful spade,
And hard-faced Blaven snorting in his wrath,
A genial bed hath made,

Where herbs shall spring, and delicate hands shall bind
The various-painted flower,
And children play, and old men walk, and find
Rest in the odorous bower.
These be Thy wonders, Lord, to pondering heart
In storm and cloud revealed,
Perpetual miracle, prolific art,
From sceptic wit concealed;
These shew to me, while humbly I would trace
Through rich-confounding maze
Thy reasoned plan, and with the angelic race
Mingle weak human praise,
To Him who sits supreme in righteous state
Above man's partial mood,
And worketh peace from storm, and love from hate;
And all He doth is good.

ORKNEY.

THE OLD MAN OF HOY.

The old man of Hoy
Looks out on the sea,
Where the tide runs strong and the wave rides free:
He looks on the broad Atlantic sea,
And the old man of Hoy
Hath this great joy,
To hear the deep roar of the wide blue ocean,
And to stand unmoved 'mid the sleepless motion,
And to feel o'er his head
The white foam spread
From the wild wave proudly swelling,
And to care no whit
For the storm's rude fit
Where he stands on his old rock-dwelling,
This rare old man of Hoy.

The old man of Hoy
Looks out on the sea,
Where the tide runs strong and the wave rides free:
He looks on the broad Atlantic sea,
And the old man of Hoy
Hath this great joy,
To look on the flight of the wild sea-mew,
With their hoar nests hung o'er the waters blue;
To see them swing
On plunging wing,
And to hear their shrill notes swelling,
And with them to reply
To the storm's war-cry,
As he stands on his old rock-dwelling;
This rare old man of Hoy.

The old man of Hoy
Looks out on the sea,
Where the tide runs strong, and the wave rides free:
He looks on the broad Atlantic sea,
And the old man of Hoy
Hath this great joy,
When the sea is white, and the sky is black,

And the helmless ship drives on like wrack,
To see it dash
At his feet with a crash,
And the sailors' death-note knelling,
And to hear their shrieks
With pitiless cheeks,
This stern old man of Hoy.

The old man of Hoy
Looks out on the sea,
Where the tide runs strong, and the wave rides free:
He looks on the broad Atlantic sea,
And the old man of Hoy
Hath this great joy,
To think on the pride of the sea-kings old,
Harolds, and Ronalds, and Sigurds bold,
Whose might was felt,
By the cowering Celt,
When he heard their war-cry yelling;
But the sea-kings are gone,
And he stands alone,
Firm on his old rock-dwelling,
This stout old man of Hoy.

The old man of Hoy
Looks out on the sea,
Where the tide runs strong and the wave rides free:
He looks on the broad Atlantic sea,
And the old man of Hoy
Hath this great joy,
To think on the gods that were mighty of yore,
Braga, and Baldur, and Odin, and Thor,
And giants of power
In fateful hour,
'Gainst the great gods rebelling:
But the gods are all dead,
And he rears his head
Alone from his old rock-dwelling,
This stiff old man of Hoy.

But listen to me,
Old man of the sea,
List to the Skulda that speaketh by me;
The Nornies are weaving a web for thee,
Thou old man of Hoy,
To ruin thy joy,
And to make thee shrink from the lash of the ocean,

And teach thee to quake with a strange commotion,
When over thy head
And under thy bed
The rampant wave is swelling,
And thou shalt die
'Neath a pitiless sky,
And reel from thine old rock-dwelling,
Thou stout old man of Hoy!

THE DEATH OF HACO.

The summer is gone, Haco, Haco,
The yellow year is fled,
And the winter is come, Haco,
That numbers thee with the dead!

When the year was young, Haco, Haco,
And the skies were blue and bright,
Thou didst sweep the seas, Haco,
Like a bird with wings of might.

With thine oaken galley proudly,
And thy gilded dragon-prow,
O'er the bounding billows, Haco,
Like a sea-god thou didst go.

With thy barons gaily, gaily,
All in proof of burnished mail,
In the voes of Orkney, Haco,
Thou didst spread thy prideful sail;

And the sturdy men of Caithness,
And the land of the Mackay,
And the men of stony Parf, Haco,
Knew that Norway's king was nigh.

And the men of outmost Lewis, Haco,
And Skye, with winding kyles,
And Macdougall's country, Haco,
Knew the monarch of the isles.

And the granite peaks of Arran,
And the rocks that fence the Clyde,
Saw thy daring Norsemen, Haco,
Ramping o'er the Scottish tide!

But scaith befell thee, Haco, Haco!
Thou wert faithful, thou wert brave;
But not truth might shield thee, Haco,
From a false and shuffling knave.

The crafty King of Scots, Haco,
Who might not bar thy way,
Beguiled thee, honest Haco,
With lies that bred delay.

And hasty winter, Haco, Haco,
Came and tripped the summer's heels,
And rent the sails of Haco,
And swamped his conquering keels.

Woe is me for Haco, Haco!
On Lorn and Mull and Skye
The hundred ships of Haco
In a thousand fragments lie!

And thine oaken galley, Haco,
That sailed with kingly pride,
Came shorn and shattered, Haco,
Through the foaming Pentland tide.

And thy heart sank, Haco, Haco,
And thou felt that thou must die,
When the bay of Kirkwall, Haco,
Thou beheld with drooping eye.

And they led thee, Haco, Haco,
To the bishop's lordly hall,
Where thy woe-struck barons, Haco,
Stood to see the mighty fall.

And the purple churchmen, Haco,
Stood to hold thy royal head,
And good words of hope to Haco
From the Holy Book they read.

Then outspake the dying Haco,
"Dear are God's dear words to me,
But read the book to Haco
Of the kings that ruled the sea."

Then they read to dying Haco,
From the ancient Saga hoar,
Of Holden and of Harold,
When his fathers worshipped Thor.

And they shrove the dying Haco,
And they prayed his bed beside;
And with holy unction Haco
Drooped his kingly head and died.

And in parade of death, Haco,
They stretched thee on thy bed,
With a purple vest for Haco,
And a garland on his head.

And around thee, Haco, Haco,
Were tapers burning bright,
And masses were sung for Haco
By day and eke by night.

And they bore thee, Haco, Haco,
To holy Magnus' shrine,
And beside his sainted bones, Haco,
They chastely coffined thine.

And above thee, Haco, Haco,
To deck thy dreamless bed,
All crisp with gold for Haco,
A purple pall they spread.

And around thee, Haco, Haco,
Where the iron sleep thou slept,
Through the long dark winter, Haco,
A solemn watch they kept.

And at early burst of spring-time,
When the birds sang out with glee,
They took the body of Haco
In a ship across the sea—

Across the sea to Norway,
  Where thy sires make moan for thee,
That the last of his race was Haco,
  Who ruled the Western sea.

And they laid thee, Haco, Haco,
  With thy sires on the Norway shore,
And far from the isles of the sea, Haco,
  That know thy name no more.

STENNIS.

I.

HERE on the green marge of the wrinkled lake
Far-winding snake-like, north, south, east, and west,
From these grey stones thy Sabbath sermon take,
And in the lap of hoary memory rest!
Who framed the cirque, who dug the moat, who sleeps
'Neath the soft silence of the old green mound
I shun to ask: Time, the stern warder, keeps
The key of dateless secrets underground.
This only know, when early man appeared,
Scouring the brown heaths of these wind-swept isles,
He had both thought and thews, and proudly reared
These gaunt recorders of his brawny toils.
Like him be thou; and let thy work proclaim
Thy strength, when Time forgets to spell thy name.

STENNIS.

II.

THESE old grey stones, what are they?—pillars reared
By men who lived and died in Orkney land,
Long ere the footsteps shod with peace appeared,
To plant the Cross on this surf-beaten strand;
Pillars that preach high thought and mightful hand
Of men that bravely through grim ocean steered,
And stoutly followed what they proudly planned
Through sweat and blood, nor from their purpose veered.
What men?—Celt or the Teut?—I nothing care,
My loves are with the living, not the dead;
But for strong men who knew to do and dare
I drop the loyal tear and bow the head.
Let gentle moons glide o'er the dumb grey stones
That guard their graves!—I would not vex their bones.

MAESHOW.

THOU fair green mound on the wide brown heath
Where the strong-winged breezes blow,
I wonder who the wight might be
That slept thy cone below.

Some haughty Jarl, some Norway King,
A stormy loon, whose life
Was still to risk the chanceful death,
And whet the deathful strife.

A Jarl who swept the seas with war,
And ruled with brawny might,
And where his forceful arm prevailed,
Pronounced his lordship right.

Or was it a Celt, the primal drift
From the men-dispersing East,
When cravens crouched to Nimrod's name,
And despot power increased,—

The Celt who reared the huge grey stones
That stand and scorn the gale,
Erect in pride of hoary strength,
While creeds and kingdoms fail?

Or was it a dame, a sorceress,
With charm and ban compelling,
Who framed this grassy mound to roof
Her dark and chambered dwelling,

That she with Hela might converse,
And with the Nornies three,
And to her will bend fearful men
With baneful glamourie?

Or was it a lady fair and fine,
Of queenly worth, to whom
Her lord, with proud regardful grief,
Upreared this stately tomb?

I know not: but, while thus I mused,
A tall, strong-featured man
Came up to me with torch and key,
And thus to speak began:

"Good sir, if you this mound admire
Without so grassy green,
Within 'twill prick your wonder more,
And tax your wit, I ween."

He spoke, and oped the massy door,
And led the way to me,
Thorough a passage long and low,
With mighty masonrie

Right bravely fenced; and soon beneath
A chambered vault we stood
Of shapely stones with chilly glance
Of earthy drip bedewed.

And where the glimmering torch was held—
The tale I tell is true—
A dragon shape upon the wall
Uncouthly came to view.

A dragon of the scaly brood,
Like dire Chimera old,
Transfixed upon the bristling back
By lance of hero bold.

A dragon dire, and eke a snake ;
A snake, whose glittering twine
Embraced a rod, like Hermes' wand,
I saw with wondering eyne.

And right and left the cold dank wall
Was lettered strangely round
With scripture rude, to tell the tale
Of him who built the mound.

But what it told of Saga old
And stout sea-roving loons
I might not know : much wiser men
May spell the mystic Runes.

This only lore my beggar wit
Could eathly understand,
That mighty men had lived of yore,
And died in Orkney land.

I left the chilly chamber then,
And through the passage low
I crept, and walked into the light
Where healthful breezes blow ;

And in the bright blue sky rejoiced,
And in the grassy sod,
And far and free o'er Harra Moor
With lightsome foot I trod.

SHETLAND.

BURRA FIORD.

(SONG.)

COME hither all ye Norsemen brave
That ply the limber oar,
We'll have a jolly pull to-day
With you on the Shetland shore!
Landlubbers we, and strange to boats;
But, if you'll bear a hand,
We'll shake the dust from off our coats
On the breezy Shetland strand.

(*Chorus.*) Pull away, pull away, ye jolly Norsemen!
Where the sea-mew floats, and the kittiwake cries,
And the dark-winged guillemots plunge and rise;
Pull away, pull away, pull away!

Come Jamieson, Johnson and Sandison,
Come Josie that well may brag
How he plucked the eagle by the throat
From the face of the white sea-crag.
O Josie, Josie! break-neck loon,
Where thy strong arms prevail
We'll take the Fuggla by the crown,
The Uytstack by the tail!
(*Chorus.*) Pull away! &c.

Now lightly neath the toppling rock,
Ye jolly sailors brave,
With bounding prow, we plough the deep
And skim the sheeny wave;
While o'er our heads, a gamesome troop,
The fowls that fish the sea,
With plumy plunge and wavy swoop
Come drifting merrily!
(*Chorus.*) Pull away! &c.

Now gently, gently dip your oars,
Ye jolly sailors brave,
While neath the rocky arch we pass.

And through the hollow cave,
Where the puffins stand, a staring band,
And wonder who we be
That dare invade the fortress made
For them on Shetland sea!
(*Chorus.*) Pull away! &c.

Now turn the helm, and with strong arm
The sounding billows smite,
And cross to Fuggla's jagged rock
That shows the saviour-light,
And bear us bravely o'er the bay
Where the huge wave swells with pride,
And cut your way through foam and spray
Of the big Atlantic tide!
(*Chorus.*) Pull away! &c.

Now land, and scale the height which bears
The sailor's radiant mark,
The tower, by daring builders reared
To guide the labouring bark,
Where the tempest stalks with Titan stride,
And the wave with thundering shock

Lashes the grim rock's furrowed side,
And shakes the mighty block;
(*Chorus.*) Pull away! &c.

Now on the top we stand; and now
Our share we proudly claim
In this extremest horn of land
That knows Victoria's name.
God save the Queen!—her praise be told
On Shetland's Northmost isle,
With his, the master-builder bold
Who raised this stable pile.

(*Chorus.*) Sing hurrah-rah-rah! ye jolly Norsemen,
Where the wild blasts blow, and the big waves roll,
And the strong tower stands with its front to the pole;
Sing hurrah, sing hurrah, sing hurrah!

Now fare ye well, ye warders wise,
Who watch this storm-vext shore!
Backward we plough the heaving flood,
And ply the limber oar.
Landlubbers we, and strange to boats,

But, while we lift an arm,
We'll keep a heart beneath our coats
To Shetland seamen warm.

(*Chorus.*) Pull away, pull away, ye jolly Norsemen,
Where the big tides roll, and the strong winds blow;
For the white fog comes, and we must go;
Pull away, pull away, pull away!

ARGYLLSHIRE.

GLENCOE.

A HISTORICAL BALLAD.

I.

THE snow is white on the Pap of Glencoe,
And all is bleak and dreary,
But gladness reigns in the vale below,
Where life is blithe and cheery,
Where the old Macdonald, stout and true,
Sits in the hall which his fathers knew,
Sits, with the sword which his fathers drew
On the old wall glancing clearly,
Where the dry logs blaze on the huge old hearth,
And the old wine flows that fans the mirth
Of the friends that love him dearly.

Heavily, heavily lies the snow
On the old grey ash and the old blue pine,

And the cold winds drearily drearily blow
Down the glen with a moan and a whine;
But little reck they how the storm may bray,
Or the linn may roar in the glen,
Where the bright cups flow, and the light jests play,
And Macdonald is master of men,
Where Macdonald is king of the feast to-night,
And sways the hour with a landlord's right,
And broadens his smile, and opens his breast,
As a host may do to a dear-loved guest;
And many a stirring tale he told
Of battle, and war, and chase,
And heroes that sleep beneath the mould,
The pride of his lordly race;
And many a headlong venture grim,
With the hounds that track the deer,
By the rifted chasm's hanging rim
And the red-scaured mountain sheer.
And many a song did the harper sing
Of Ossian blind and hoary,
That made the old oak rafter ring
With the pulse of Celtic story;
And the piper blew a gamesome reel

That the young blood hotly stirred,
And they beat the ground with lightsome heel
Till the midnight bell was heard.
And then to rest they laid them down,
And soon the strong sleep bound them,
While the winds without kept whistling rout,
And the thick snows drifted round them.

II.

But one there was whose eye that night
No peaceful slumber knew,
Or, if he slept, he dreamt of blood,
And woke by Coe's far-sounding flood,
To make his dreaming true.
A Campbell was he, of a hated clan,
—God's curse be on his name!—
Who to Macdonald's goodly glen
On traitor's errand came.
He had the old man's niece to wife,
(A love that should have buried strife,)
And shook his hand for faithful proof,
And slept beneath his friendly roof;
And he that night had shared the mirth

Around the old man's friendly hearth,
And, wise in devil's art,
Had laughed and quaffed, and danced and sung,
And talked with honey on his tongue,
And murder in his heart.
And now, to buy a grace from power
And men the slaves of the venal hour,
Or with the gust of blood to sate
A heart whose luxury was hate,
His hand was on the whetted knife
That thirsts to drink the old man's life;
And soon the blood shall flow,
From which the curse shall grow,
That since the world to sin began
Pursues the lawless-handed man;
And false Glen Lyon's traitor name
Shall live, a blazing badge of shame,
While memory links the crimson crime,
The basest in the book of Time,
With Campbell and Glencoe.

III.

'Tis five o'clock i' the morn; of light

No glimmering ray is seen,
And the snow that drifted through the night
Shrouds every spot of green.
Not yet the cock hath blown his horn,
But the base red-coated crew
Creep through the silence of the morn
With butcher-work to do.
And now to the old man's house they came,
Where he lived in the strength of his proud old name,
A brave unguarded life;
And now they enter the old oak room,
Where he lay, all witless of his doom,
In the arms of his faithful wife;
And through the grace of his hoary head,
As he turned him starting from his bed,
They shot the deadly-missioned lead,
And reaved his purple life;
Then from the lady, where she lay
With outstretched arms in blank dismay,
They rove the vest, and in deray
They flung her on the floor;
And from her quivering fingers tore
With their teeth the rare old rings she wore;

Then haled her down the oaken stair
Into the cold unkindly air,
And in the snow they left her there,
Where not a friend was nigh,
With many a curse, and never a tear,
Like an outcast beast to die.

IV.

And now the butcher-work went on
Hotly, hotly up the glen;
For the order was given full sharply then
The lion to slay with the cubs in his den,
And never a male to spare;
And the king's own hand had signed the ban,
To glut the hate of the Campbell clan,
And the spite of the Master of Stair.
From every clachan in long Glencoe
The shriek went up, and the blood did flow
Reeking and red on the wreathèd snow.
Every captain had his station
On the banks of the roaring water,
Watching o'er the butchered nation
Like the demons of the slaughter.

Lindsay raged at Invercoe,
And laid his breathless twenty low;
At Inveruggen, Campbell grim
Made the floor with gore to swim—
Nine he counted in a row
Brothered in a bloody show,
And one who oft for him had spread
The pillow 'neath his traitor head,
To woo the kindly rest.
At Auchnachoin stern Barker pressed
The pitiless work with savage zest,
And on the broad mead by the water
Heaped ten souls in huddled slaughter.
The young man blooming in his pride,
The old man with crack'd breath,
The bridegroom severed from his bride,
And son with father side by side,
Lie swathed in one red death;
And Fire made league with Murder fell
Where flung by many a raging hand,
From house to house the flaming brand
Contagious flew; and crackling spar
And crashing beam, make hideous jar,

And pitchy volumes swell.
What horror stalked the glen that day,
What ghastly fear and grim dismay,
No tongue of man may tell;
What shame to Orange William's sway,
When Murder throve with honours decked,
And every traitor stood erect,
And every true man fell!

V.

'Tis twelve o'clock at noon; and still
Heavily, heavily on the hill
The storm outwreaks his wintry will,
And flouts the blinded sun;
And now the base red-coated crew,
And the fiends in hell delight to view
The sanguine slaughter done.
But where be they, the helpless troop,
Spared by red murder's ruthless swoop—
The feeble woman, the maiden mild,
The mother with her sucking child,
And all who fled with timely haste
From hissing shot, and sword uncased?

Hurrying from the reeking glen,
They are fled, some here, some there;
Some have scrambled up the Ben
And crossed the granite ridges bare,
And found kind word and helping hand
On Appin's green and friendly strand;
Some in the huts of lone Glenure
Found kindly care and shelter sure,
And some in face of the tempest's roar,
Behind the shelving Buchailmore,
With stumbling foot did onward press
To thy Ben-girdled nook, Dalness;
And some huge Cruachan's peak behind
Found a broad shield from drift and wind,
And warmed their frozen frames at fires
Kindled by friendly Macintyres.
But most—O Heaven!—a feeble nation,
Crept slowly from the mountain station;
The old, the sickly, and the frail,
Went blindly on with straggling trail,
The little tender-footed maid,
The little boy that loved to wade
In the clear waters of the Coe,

Ere blood had stained their amber flow—
On them, ere half their way was made,
The night came down, and they were laid,
Some on the scaurs of the jaggèd Bens,
Some in black bogs and stony glens,
Faint and worn, till kindly Death
Numbed their limbs, and froze their breath,
And wound them in the snow.
And there they lay with none to know,
And none with pious kind concern
To honour with a cross or cairn
The remnant of Glencoe.
And on the hills a curse doth lie
That will not die with years;
And oft-times 'neath a scowling sky,
Through the black rent, where the torrent grim
Leaps 'neath the huge crag's frowning rim,
The wind comes down with a moan and a sigh;
And a voice, like the voice of a wail and a cry,
The lonely traveller hears,
A voice, like the voice of Albyn weeping
For the sorrow and the shame
That stained the British soldier's name,

When kingship was in butchers' keeping,
And power was honour's foe;
Weeping for scutcheons rudely torn,
And worth disowned and glory shorn,
And for the valiant-hearted men
That once were mighty in the glen
Of lonely bleak Glencoe.

SONNETS.

I.

KING'S HOUSE INN.

Fair are the trees whose random tresses fling
  Rich grace on the green steeps of Ballachulish;
  But King's House Inn, though you may deem it foolish,
And its bleak moor, my wilful Muse will sing.
For why? I love the torrent's savage din,
  The giant-trailing mist, the snorting Ben,
  The wind-swept heath, the long, deer-sheltering glen,
The still black tarn, and far-up-thundering linn.
And here erect with majesty severe
  The Buchail More upshoots his Titan cone;
  I stand and look and gaze on Him alone,
As if no other mighty Ben were near,
And hear the pewits cry, and the wind blow
Notes of shrill wail up from the steep Glencoe!

II.

MOONLIGHT AT KING'S HOUSE.

O FOR the touch that smote the psalmist's lyre,
When the great beauty of the world he saw,
And sang His praise, instinct with holy awe,
Who rides the whirlwind, and who reins the fire!
But not alone proud Lebanon's fulgent face
Hath power the eye of trancèd seer to draw;
Here, too, in Grampian land God rules by law,
Which clothes the awfullest forms in loveliest grace.
The placid moon, the huge sky-cleaving Ben,
The moor loch glancing in the argent ray,
The long white mist low-trailing up the glen,
The hum of mighty waters far away,
All make me wish that worthy words would come;
But all I find is—worship, and be dumb!

III.

TO

AN OLD LEAFLESS TREE ON THE MOOR,

NEAR KING'S HOUSE.

Poor wreck of the old forest, gaunt and grim,
No leafy fan, no soft green shade is thine,
But thou hast charms will stir a rhymer's whim
To deck thy ruin with a random line.
Where be thy brothers? I have seen them show
Their prostrate roots beneath long-centuried peat
Mile after mile, where nothing now will grow
Verdant, for eye to love or mouth to eat.
But thou alone dost stand, like some old creed,
Erect, to show what price it had before,
When men believed it had a power indeed,
To soothe each sorrow, and to cleanse each sore;
Or, like a statesman by the moving time
Deserted, in his dry old strength sublime.

IV.

THE BUCHAILL ETIVE.

Thou lofty shepherd of dark Etive glen,
Tall Titan warder of the grim Glencoe,
I clomb thy starward peak not long ago,
And call thee mine, and love thee much since then.
Oft have I marvelled, if mine eye had been
Strange witness to Creation's natal hour,
How wondrous then had showed the flaming scene
When out of seething depths thy cone with power
Was shot from God. But now upon thy steep
Fair greenness sleeps on old secure foundations,
And on thee browze the innocent-bleating sheep
And timorous troops of the high-antlered nations;
And I am here, Time's latest product, Man,
To work thy will, O Lord, and serve thy stately plan.

SONG OF BEN CRUACHAN.

BEN CRUACHAN is king of the mountains,
That gird in the lovely Loch Awe,
Loch Etive is fed from his fountains,
By the stream of the dark-rushing Awe.
With his peak so high,
He cleaves the sky,
That smiles on his old grey crown,
While the mantle green,
On his shoulders seen,
In many a fold flows down.

He looks to the North, and he renders
A greeting to Nevis Ben,
And Nevis, in white snowy splendours,
Gives Cruachan greeting again.
O'er dread Glencoe
The greeting doth go,

And where Etive winds fair in the glen ;
And he hears the call,
In his steep North wall,
"God bless thee, old Cruachan Ben !"

When the North winds their fordes muster,
And Ruin rides high on the storm,
All calm, in the midst of their bluster,
He stands, with his forehead enorm.
When block on block,
With thundering shock,
Comes hurtled confusedly down,
No whit recks He,
But laughs to shake free
The dust, from his old grey crown.

And while torrents on torrents are pouring
In a tempest of truculent glee,
When louder the loud Awe is roaring,
And the soft lake rides like a sea ;
He smiles through the storm,
And his heart grows warm,
As he thinks how his streams feed the plains ;

And the brave old Ben
Grows young again,
And swells with enforcèd veins.

For Cruachan is king of the mountains,
That gird in the lovely Loch Awe,
Loch Etive is fed from his fountains,
By the stream of the dark-rushing Awe.
Ere Adam was made,
He reared his head
Sublime o'er the green-winding glen;
And, when flame wraps the sphere,
O'er Earth's ashes shall peer
The peak of the old Granite Ben!

THE ASCENT OF CRUACHAN.

I.

Dwellers in the sounding city,
Peoplers of the peaceful glen,
Come with me, the day is pleasant,
I would scale the tway-coned Ben.
Not with fly to lure the salmon,
Where the torrent scoops the glen
Makes me pleasure, but I dearly
Love to climb a peakèd Ben;
Not with shot and mortal vollies
To bring moorcock down, or hen,
Is my glory, but I triumph,
Perched upon a cloud-capt Ben.
Come with me, the day is pleasant,
Soon the mist may veil again

All the glory of the mountains ;
Up, and let us scale the Ben !

II.

See her rising proud before you,
In the beauty of the morn,
Queen of all the heights that grandly
Fence the storied land of Lorn ;
Land of Campbells and MacDougalls,
Where full many a practised hand,
Nerved with high heroic purpose,
Poised the spear, and waved the brand.
I am ready ; profits neither
Dull delay, nor puffing haste ;
Let your foot be lightly booted,
Grasp your plaid about your waist;
Fill your pouch with lusty viands ;
On the breezy top we dine ;
Brim your flask with strength-inspiring
Usquebeatha * or fervid wine.

* This word is a good example of how the Scottish Celts take the bones out of their words by elision of medial or final consonants. *Beatha* is just the Latin *vita ;* and *usque*, as is well known, is *aqua ;* but the last element of the compound is pronounced as if written *pai*.

Cross we first the regal-rolling,
Swift, dark-rushing mountain flood,
Sweeping the broad base of Cruachan,
In his untamed lustihood ;*
Brush we o'er the tufted heather,
Light with nimble unconcern,
Plunge we through the plumy forests
Of the broad and branching fern !
Leap the brook that bounces lightly,
Scale the scaur that gleams so red,
Grasp the rowan tree whose berries
Shine like rubies overhead ;
Creep beneath the hoary-frosted
Crag, where crusted lichens spread,
By the dark pool where the troutling
Glances from his stony bed.
But not rashly ; hear my counsel ;
Though ye be right valiant men,
None can storm by rude assaulting
Such a huge, sheer-sided Ben.

* The river Awe, famous for salmon. In the autumn, when I climbed the Ben, John Bright, the famous reformer, was living in the neighbour-inn of Taynuilt, lashing the flood with the salmon-rod, and teaching his brain to repose with a wise vacuity.

Look about, above, around you,
Map the mountain in your mind,
And with cunning engineering
Surely rise and wisely wind;
As a gunner near and nearer,
With a cool courageous breath,
Round some proud, broad-bastioned fortress,
Draws the circling lines of death.

III.

Ha! look there where right above us
Peers the grey and blasted cone!
Like a jag of high Olympus,
'Neath the dark-browed Thunderer's throne!
Onward through the grim disorder
Of each grey embedded stone,
Ruin, which a thousand winters,
Shivered from the splintered cone!
Here's for tender shins no mercy;
If you stumble, there you lie;
Like a goat be tough and springy,
Like a fox be sure and sly;
Have no flaunting tags about you;

By this snouted crag will blow
Oft a sudden whiff will fling you
Like a whirling straw below.
Now, by Heaven! it looks full surly;
From the East the white mists sally,
Sweeping far from lofty Lomond,
Drifting up from fair Dalmally.
Thick and thicker, swift and swifter,
On the blinding rack is borne,
Like a race of Furies driving
Madly with their mantles torn.
Softly, softly! fear no peril
Where we creep from block to block,
Any stiffest blast can only
Nail us stiffer to the rock.
Foot it firmly, o'er the jointed
Frost-split slabs that mark the line
Through the mist, along the edges
Of the black Ben's jaggy spine.
If you turn from this brave venture,
Now you have the broad-browed Ben
By the forelock, I will never
Call you bearded man again!

IV.

Now we've done it! here I'm seated,
With light-hearted unconcern,
Sheltered from the rude South-Easter
By the huge Ben's topmost cairn.
Here's my hand! spring up beside me,
Though the way be black and rough,
Take a lesson from your shaggy
Friend, the valiant-hearted Muff.
All along the ledge he followed,
Close with frequent pant and puff,
Running, leaping, scraping, tumbling,
Made of genuine Highland stuff.
Ha! thank heaven! the mist is clearing,
Lo! beneath the curtained cloud,
Gleams in glory of the sunshine
Emerald field, and silver flood!
Northward, at your feet dark Etive
Mildly shines with lucid sheen,
Land of Macintyres behind you
Glistens vivid with the green.
Through the giant gap where downward
Sheer the madded torrent pours,

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In the weeks of wintry horror,
When the tempest raves and roars.
Southward, like a belt of silver,
Flooded from a thousand rills,
Stretches far Loch Awe the lovely,
Through a land of dark-brown hills.
Eastward, lo! the lofty Lomond
And Balquidder's purple braes,
Land of stout strong-armed MacGregors,
Strangely loom through saffron haze;
Look! O look, that burst of splendour
In the West, that blaze of gold
Tells where round Mull's terraced headlands,
Broad the breasted waves are rolled
At thy base, thou huge-aspiring,
Triple-crested proud Ben More,
Known to Staffa's rock-ribbed temple,
To Iona's hallowed shore.
Speak not here of painted pictures,
Which the hand of man may limn;
All their grandest lines are dwarfish,
All their brightest hues are dim.
Thou alone hast living pictures

Mighty Mind that moves the whole,
Pulsing through the vasty splendour
With thine all-informing soul.

v.

Hear me now, stout-footed comrades;
In the scaling of the Ben
We have done our tasking bravely,
With the thews of Scottish men.
We have gazed and we have wondered,
We have mapped the pictured scene;
But we cannot feed on wonder
Where the air is sharp and keen.
Ope your stores, unlock your wallet,
Pour the strength-inspiring wine;
With the granite slab for table,
On the summit here we dine.
If there be who rashly pledged him
To abstain from usquebeatha,
I do grant a free indulgence,
From his chilly vow to day.
Nectar drink in fields Elysian,
But where biting airs have sway,

He alone with proof is mailèd,
Who is lined with usquebeatha.
Bravely started! crown your glasses
Now with the untainted flood,
Of this glorious old Oporto,
That makes rich the British blood!
Fill a bumper to Breadalbane,
And the men that hunt the deer;
Let the wise Argyll be honoured,
Mild of heart, of thought severe!
Let his gallant son be toasted,
Lorn, whose lofty love broke down
Walls of ancient harsh partition,
'Twixt the people and the crown;
Let the billow of your pæans
To Dunolly's tower be borne:
Praise the good and gentle lady,
Praise the deedful maid of Lorn!
Praise the land of mist and mountain,
Grassy glen, and purple brae,
Crystal well, and foamy fountain,
Ruddy pine, and birchen spray.
Praise all men who foot it bravely

Up the bright and breezy way,
Where Titanic Nature broadens
Out in beautiful display.
Now 'tis finished: look how darkly
Mount the rolling mists again;
Here to bide would bribe the ague,
We must turn and gain the glen.
Then fare-thee-well, thou tway-coned Cruachan;
'Mid the busy haunts of men
Thou shalt live a joy for ever
In our hearts, thou queenly Ben!

SONNETS.

I.

ON THE MONUMENT TO NELSON AT TAYNUILT.

STRANGER, if thou hast wondering seen the grey
Huge-planted stones on Sarum's breezy downs,
Where once the Druid reigned with awful sway
Above the might of croziers and of crowns,
See here their antitype—a crude block raised
By sweatful smelters on this wooded strand
To him, whose valour, like a meteor, blazed
O'er the wide ocean. With more curious hand
Sculptor and mason oft did league their skill
To memorize his name; but this rude stone,
Perched in his unhewn ruggedness alone,
Stands, a stout witness of heroic will,
In face of thee, fair Cruachan, and all
Thy subject Bens, and Heaven's blue vaulted hall.

II.

BEN CRUACHAN IN A DARK EVENING.

As a fair mountain when the day hath run
His course, and scanty stars are faintly seen,
Swathes him in folds of sombre mantle dun,
Shorn of the purple glories and the green;
So a fair lady—saddest of sad sights—
Who yields her humour to a peevish whim,
Casts out the radiant Phœbus, and for him
Brings in a devil, who blows out all the lights.
O, if ye knew, all dames with lovely faces,
How much ye mar your beauty with your spleen,
You'd covet more than finest silks and laces
The spirit-power that paints the fleshly screen!
Manners are masks; but keep the fountain bright,
And thy whole body shall be full of light.

III.

JOHN BRIGHT AT TAYNUILT.

(1).

SAYST thou?—and he was truly seated here
That stout broad-breasted, firmly-planted man,
Who with brave heart, blithe look, and jovial cheer,
To victory led the democratic clan.
There are who deem there is no truth in history,
Lies count by hundredweights, and truth by grains;
But I'll speak plainly out and say, the mystery
Lies only in their lack of sense and brains;
This fact I know, by one strong word, REFORM,
Bright hotly stirred the people's fretful mind,
Till Whig and Tory grew with envy warm,
And spurred with him, not to be left behind;
Some served their party bravely, some betrayed,
And all danced well as this proud piper played.

IV.

JOHN BRIGHT AT TAYNUILT.

(II).

WHAT? lodged he here and sat in that same chair,
The thunder-tongued, high-purposed democrat;
He was an honest man, I'll stand for that—
And where he sate I'll sit well seated there.
No doubt his hand a seething broth did brew,
Perhaps too strong for old John Bull's digestion,
But 'twas a needful purge beyond all question
He deemed, life's crazy framework to renew.
If he was wrong, and history tells no tales,
Then who was right, if false then who was true,
When Whig and Tory spread their rival sails
To catch sweet favour from the gale he blew?
All sinned: but they transgressed all honest rules
Who knocked the workman down, then made bread
with his tools.

OBAN.

HUMOURS OF HIGHLAND WEATHER.

Whither, O whither hath fled
The lightsome and lovely display
Of Beauty, but yesterday shed
On the crag, and the Ben, and the bay?
Up from the West came a cloud,
Small, but to greatness it grew,
Till it wove from its tissue a shroud
That curtains the breadth of the blue.

I look and I see in the far
Banners of darkness unfurl'd,
Volumes of dimness that mar
The smile on the face of the world:

Gone into blankness hath fled
The emerald stretch of the glen,
And the rosy gleam on the head
Of the broad purpureal Ben.

Such are the humours that blot
The sky with the change of the year;
Would'st thou be mortal, and not
Temper thy bliss with a tear?
Would'st thou have day without night?
Ponder a moment, and own
That shadow must come with the light,
And day by the darkness be known.

Wisely the Mighty one blends
Gloom with the glory of things,
Grieving with gladness he sends
Wisely to beggars and kings.
Wisely he liveth who links
His life as a part to the whole,
Wisely he thinketh who thinks
Humbly, with hymns in his soul.

A SEPTEMBER BLAST IN OBAN.

By Heaven! the house is rocking like a ship;
The strong trees bend like osiers, and the sea
Flings long white scourges forth, with truculent glee,
And rides with madded speed high-armed, to whip
The quaking land! O what an altered theme
From yesterday, when in the breezeless glen
The sear leaf dropt, and high on Cruachan Ben
The white cloud rested like a saintly dream.
Such are thy changes, universal Lord,
Fearful to feeble man! but thou art strong,
And Nature still rings forth a jubilant song,
Where thy sure hand doth sweep the varied chord.
Our house may reel; but, as no storm had been,
The big round globe rolls through the blue Serene.

THE LAST WEEK OF SEPTEMBER IN OBAN.

Dear love, what change in the fair face of things
Since first this peaceful green retreat we knew,
When every sun shone through a lovelier blue,
And every zephyr flapped more fragrant wings!
And thou didst sit upon the turfy bank
While thy green parrot wandered round thy neck,
Drinking in beauty, where the day-god sank
In golden soft repose without a speck.
But now the rainful blast comes whistling by,
The black-maned clouds, like Furies on the wing
Skir past; the sea growls up with bristling looks.
What remedy?—thank heaven the cure is nigh,
Heap up the logs, and trim the lamp, and bring
Our winter-friends, our long-neglected books.

INVERNESS-SHIRE.

THE LAY OF THE BRAVE CAMERON.

At Quatre Bras, when the fight ran high,
Stout Cameron stood with wakeful eye,
Eager to leap, as a mettlesome hound,
Into the fray with a plunge and a bound.
But Wellington, lord of the cool command,
Held the reins with a steady hand,
Saying, "Cameron, wait, you'll soon have enough,
Giving the Frenchman a taste of your stuff,
When the Cameron men are wanted."

Now hotter and hotter the battle grew,
With tramp, and rattle, and wild halloo,
And the Frenchmen poured, like a fiery flood,
Right on the ditch where Cameron stood.
Then Wellington flashed from his steadfast stance
On his captain brave a lightning glance,

Saying, "Cameron, now have at them, boy,
Take care of the road to Charleroi,
Where the Cameron men are wanted!"

Brave Cameron shot like a shaft from a bow,
Into the midst of the plunging foe,
And with him the lads whom he loved, like a torrent
Sweeping the rocks in its foamy current;
And he fell the first in the fervid fray,
Where a deathful shot had shove its way,
But his men pushed on where the work was rough,
Giving the Frenchman a taste of their stuff,
Where the Cameron men were wanted.

Brave Cameron then, from the battle's roar,
His foster-brother stoutly bore,
His foster-brother with service true,
Back to the village of Waterloo.
And they laid him on the soft green sod,
And he breathed his spirit there to God,
But not till he heard the loud hurrah
Of victory billowed from Quatre Bras,
Where the Cameron men were wanted.

By the road to Ghent they buried him then,
This noble chief of the Cameron men,
And not an eye was tearless seen
That day beside the alley green:
Wellington wept, the iron man;
And from every eye in the Cameron clan
The big round drop in bitterness fell,
As with the pipes he loved so well
His funeral wail they chanted.

And now he sleeps (for they bore him home,
When the war was done, across the foam)
Beneath the shadow of Nevis Ben,
With his sires, the pride of the Cameron men.
Three thousand Highlandmen stood round,
As they laid him to rest in his native ground,
The Cameron brave, whose eye never quailed,
Whose heart never sank, and whose hand never failed,
Where a Cameron man was wanted.

FASSFEARN.

Stout old Simplicity, here I wisely greet
Thy grandeur, and on Cameron's cradle look
Well pleased, heart's brother of the iron duke,
From whom the fulminant Frenchman knew defeat.
No pillared halls were there, no gay saloons,
But a plain low white house that scorned display,
Where thou wert reared as Romans were, when they
Rose from the plough to whip the Volscian loons.
O rare old times in simple manhood schooled,
From which our vauntful age hath vainly swerved,
When they who ruled, like faithful fathers ruled,
And they who served, as trustful children served!
Hence mighty captains grew, and men who bled
As heroes bleed, where dauntless Cameron led.

GLENFINNAN.

When Charlie lifted the standard
At Loch Shiel low in the glen,
His heart was lifted within him,
As he looked on the Nevis Ben.

And looked on the clans around him,
The Cameron men in their pride;
The men of Moidart and Knoydart,
And the brave Lochiel at his side.

And his blood rose proudly within him,
And he thought as he stood in the glen,
Ben Nevis is monarch of mountains,
And Charlie is monarch of men!

But many a son of the mountain,
Whose face at noon was bright,
Felt the heart within him sinking,
As he lay in his plaid that night,

While the wind through the rifts of the valley,
Came piping so shrill and so clear,
And athwart the heart of the brave man,
Swept the black shadow of fear.

And a voice was heard in the wind without,
And within in the heart of the wise,
And to the best friends of Charlie,
With bodeful pity it cries.

O Charlie, fair was the seeming,
And rare was the kilted show,
But Charlie, from daring and dreaming
No blossom to berries will grow!

THE MONUMENT

OF

PRINCE CHARLES EDWARD, AT GLENFINNAN,

LOCH SHIEL.

MISFORTUNED youth, if daring gave a claim,
And splendid hazard to a hero's glory,
Then history knew than thine no nobler story,
In the bright rolls of Greek and Roman fame.
For thou wert bold, and what thy fancy bred,
Of flattering fond conceit thy heart believed;
And they who followed where thy bright dream led,
Dashed into hopeless strife, and were deceived.
For thou lacked wisdom, and thy speed outran
Thy strength; strong trees take longest time to grow;
Wishes have wings; but in the state of man,
Deeds creep behind with limping pace and slow.
Thrice-hapless prince, for thy bold brilliant whim,
Thy friends must pay in woes that overbrim.

KINLOCH LEVEN.

As when a student toiling with annoy,
Through long dry tomes that tomb the dusty past,
Lights on some gleam of nobleness at last,
He brightens, and his heart leaps up for joy;
So glad was I when from the cheerless hue
Of broad bleak moor, black loch, and swampy fen,
Deep from the rich warm bosom of the glen,
The green Kinloch stept brightly into view.
Happy the chief who in such still retreat,
Nurses the memory of long-centuried sires,
Whose faithful people go with forward feet
Where his eye flashes, and his voice inspires,
Who makes the hills his home, and reigns a king
O'er willing hearts who love his sheltering wing.

KINLOCH MOIDART.

I.

And this is Moidart! in this extreme nook
The Stuart landed, and the Pope has friends,
And the old Faith that swears by church and book,
Stands stiffly here, and neither breaks nor bends;
Like some hoar father of a scattered race,
Vagrants of East and West, a homeless crew,
He only holds the old familiar place,
And the men know him now who always knew.
Not wise is he who vents an angry breath,
'Gainst souls that hang by Europe's hoary creed,
And, for his legs are sound, deals wanton scaith
On the old crutch that helps the limper's speed;
We all must cling to something in our need,
Else helmless tossed through darkness into death.

KINLOCH MOIDART.

II.

"PAPISTS—the Devil!" Nay, good friend, be quiet,
I live to love all things, whose name is MAN;
The west wind here may bravely rage and riot,
But spare me curses 'gainst the human clan.
Papists I've known the foremost in the van
Of God's most elect host of golden worth,
And you, poor shell-fish, squirt your spiteful ban
Against the men most like to Christ on earth!
Go to your Bible, Protestant, and learn
On prayerful knees, the one thing needful there;
This found, 'tis matter of most light concern,
What name you go by, or what dress you wear;
Fan in your breast the sacred fire that warms,
And waste no breath in wrangling about forms.

DUMBARTONSHIRE.

EDENDARACH.

A LAY OF LOCH LOMOND.

Ye gentle folks that peak and pine,
And bend your back with sickly crook
O'er counted cash or inky line,
In the grey city's dingy nook,
I pray you shake the dust away
From your brown coat some breezy day,
And, when you hear the whistle shrill
Of railway car behind the hill,
Be wise, and jump into the train,
And rattle on with hissing strain,
To see how well we spend our time
In face of Lomond Ben sublime,
At leafy Edendarach.

At Edendarach, on the shore,
Nor rattling cab, nor dusty street,
Nor eager crowds with rival roar,
Disturb our quiet, green retreat,
Where on the grassy slope we sit,
And see the light-winged shadows flit
From heather brae to heather brae,
And listen through the sunny day
To the sweet birds that hymn their love
From blooming bush or greening grove;
While we, with hearts as blithe as they,
Sing carols to the lusty May,
At leafy Edendarach.

And when we're stirred by livelier mood
And love of high adventure, then
We steam it o'er the glancing flood
To the high-fronted broad-viewed Ben.
From Rowardennan we make start,
And scale the height with cunning art
A-foot, or, if our strength be scanty,
Astride on some stout Rosinante;
From crag to crag we wend along,

With shout, and lash, and lusty song,
Far up amid the breezy blue,
But never wandering from the view
Of leafy Edendarach.

Now by the neck we seize the Ben,
And now we stand upon his crown,
And look victorious on the glen,
With dark-blue flood far-stretching down,
And view with wondering strange emotion
Bens upon bens, a tumbled ocean,
With peak, and scaur, and jagged crest,
And braes in fresh green glory drest,
And wooded isle, and gleaming bay,
And smoking cities far away,
And what defies all tongue to tell,
But in dear memory loves to dwell,
At leafy Edendarach.

Or, if a lower game shall please,
Deftly we seize the limber oar,
And, from its cove of sheltering trees,
Wing our light wherry from the shore,

Swift as an arrow from the bow,
We cut the bright loch's wavy flow;
Swift as a gull the billow skims,
Our Highland laddies stretch their limbs
With laughing eye and glowing face,
Our lasses urge the liquid race;
While Tarbet greets with loud halloo
The livery of the red and blue,
The pride of Edendarach!

From isle to isle we leap the wave,
As swift as shot from touch of trigger,
Until we come beneath the cave
Of ruddy Rob, the stout Macgregor:
Then, like a goat that loves a crag,
We scramble up from jag to jag;
On many a gnarled and tangled root
We clench the hand and fix the foot,
And cautious creep, with many a shift,
Beneath a yawning granite rift,
And, wondering, see the rock-roofed den
Which lodged that friend of honest men,
Not far from Edendarach.

Then through the tangled copsy maze,
We forage bravely all and each,
And from the wood's dry ruin raise
A crackling fire upon the beach.
Uprolls the smoke with curling pride,
The kettle boils with bubbling tide,
And from the spout all full and free,
Flow fragrant streams of dark-brown tea;
Then with strong wine and loud acclaim,
We toast the brave Macgregor's name;
Our honoured lady, too, and lord,
Who richly spread the friendly board
For us at Edendarach!

And thus from lightsome day to day,
Gaily we spend the winged time
In play, or work that's kin to play,
Beneath Ben Lomond's brow sublime.
And you—if ye are wise to think
How toil with leisure loves to link
Her various chain, and fear to grind
At the tread-mill which murders mind—
Break from your tethered task, and take

A taste of Lomond's breezy lake,
For three bright sunny weeks with me,
Amid the greenwood rambling free,
At leafy Edendarach !

ROB ROY'S CAVE.

HERE lodged Rob Roy; proud kings have palaces,
And foxes holes, and sheep the sheltering fold;
Fish own the pools, and birds the plumy trees;
And stout Rob Roy possessed this granite hold.
Call him not thief and robber: he was born
A hero more than most that wear a star,
And brooked his brawny strength with manly scorn
On fraud and force and falsehood to make war.
In these well-trimmed and well-oiled times a man
Moves part of a machine: but then strong will
Shaped each hard-sinewed life to kingly plan,
And ruled by right of might and law of skill.
When kings were weak, lords false, and lawyers knaves,
Rob Roy saved honest men from being slaves.

ARDLUI:

THE PULPIT ROCK.

I.

In sooth a goodly temple, walled behind
With crag precipitous of granite grey,
And by green birches corniced, which the wind
Sowed o'er the rim in random rich display,
And for a roof the azure-curtained hall,
Light-floating cloud, and broad benignant ray,
And organed by the hum of waterfall,
And plash of bright waves in the gleaming bay.
And here's the pulpit, this huge granite mass
Erect, frost-sundered from the mossy crown,
And there the people sit on turfy grass,
And here the fervid preacher thunders down;
Go kneel beneath Saint Paul's proud dome, and say
If God be nearer there, or here to day!

ARDLUI:

THE PULPIT ROCK.

II.

Huge Bens, green glens, hoar waterfalls, blue skies
  Belaud who will; there's something nobler here,
A thing that being seen with thoughtful eyes
  Types Scotland's strength in lines more sharp and clear.
Let others poise the pictured dome, and pour
  Through long-drawn aisles the curious-chanted prayer,
With various beauty pave the figured floor,
  And with rich clouds of perfume load the air;
But, Scotland, thou, when meddling priests would bind
  Thine unbought lips in courtly form to pray,
Thy temple in the open moor did'st find,
  Thy pulpit in the granite boulder grey;
Accept the sign, and point with sturdy pride
To thy York Minster on Loch Lomond's side!

ROSS-SHIRE.

A PSALM OF LOCH DUICH.

All Nature rests: and, save the hidden hum
Of the clear torrent in the grey ravine
Scooping its hollow way, or the low plash
Of peaceful oars across the lucid lake
Bearing their pious freight to morning church,
No sound is heard. No ripple on the face
Of the quaint-winding, mountain-girdled flood
Disturbs the fair composure of the scene:
No vagrant curl of light slow-wandering cloud
Dapples the blue serene; the mellow slopes
Glow with the russet fern; and up the glen
The green-clad cones and piny-tufted crags
In random grandeur cast, with sharp lines cleave
The softness of the rich autumnal air.
Hark! from the base of that green copsy knoll

The gentle call of the familiar bell
Invites the plaided worshippers to join
The sabbath service solemn and severe
Of Presbyterian piety. Go thou
And worship with them, if so be thy heart
Spontaneous rising to the source of Good
Chime with their hymns, and thy well tutored lips
Spell the dread mysteries of their iron creed
With awful pleasure. But if far from these
Thy spirit dwells, then let thy song ascend
Apart, with mine upon the lonely hills:
God numbers not the heads, but weighs the hearts
Of them that worship. Here nor preacher needs
With gusts of studied passion to upstir
The dull heart's stagnant pool, nor with set styles
To train thy finite mind with blind embrace
To clutch the Infinite; all the vasty world
Sublime, the living temple of his power
Invades thy sense, and occupies thy thought.
There have been fools—no void and vacant souls—
But super-subtle self-confounding wits,
Eager to doubt and studious to deny,
Who in the mighty marvel of his works

Owned not the workman ; let such pass ; but thou
With open eye and reverent-clinging heart
Worship, and with pure homage of consent
Accept his doings. What He is he shews,
And what he shews interpreted becomes
Thy law, and thy religion ; thou art bound
By Him as by the chain that bindeth all.
This the unkempt, untutored savage knew
Ere temples rose, or bell did toll to church,
Or stood the mitred priest with hands upreared
Leading the suppliant pomp, or swelled the chaunt
Of the responsive, rich, clear-throated hymn
From lips of white-stoled boys, and maidens chaste,
To sacred service trained. This with his quick
Fair-shaping fancy the old Greek declared,
When every star that gems the lucent blue,
And every ray that paints the dædal globe,
And every wave that crests the heaving brine,
And the streams bickering from a thousand glens,
And every shadow travelling o'er the hills,
Leapt into Godhead's perfect mould, to feed
His eager lust for worship. This in his watch
Star-canopied the Hebrew shepherd knew,

With holier instinct and profounder ken;
This the wild hunter in his hairy tent
Lethargic stretched, or with tempestuous foot
Chasing the ostrich. This the holy seer
Saw lonely-brooding upon Judah's hills,
And nursed the sacred thought within his breast,
Till into manhood panoplied it grew,
And spurned his bosom's narrow bound, and strode
Majestic o'er the world, and captive led
The tribes of men, and awed the hearts of kings.
Thus God in every age, and every clime,
Of his unbounded excellence some part
Or aspect, as their faculty might reach,
Dimly revealed, in various feature typed,
To the uncounted children of his love.
And we, who in these latest ages reap
The fullness of the teaching of all times,
Perched on high platforms of far-circling range,
And forcing earth and sky to yield their necks
Obedient to our yoke of lordly thought,
Shall we, with all our knowing craft, know less
Than the embruted bushman of the source
Whence knowledge comes, and all things knowable,

And rather claim low brotherhood with beasts
That with prone faces crop the foodful ground
Thinking no God?—No fellowship with you
True wisdom claims, ye who with fingering ken
Note the bare outward fact, senseless to feel
The soul that moulds the fact, and makes it be
A speechful sign of God, whose thoughts are worlds,
And in whose life all birth and death, and all
The steps of swift mutation, are but stops
In one harmonious all-involving hymn
Of wonder-working energy divine,
Instinct with reason. Not I, with twinkling lamps
Of science groping in disgodded dens
Of cold unreasoned matter love to pry,
Culling the broken shells, and husks of things
Inert and lifeless, but do gladly stray
On the bright surface and familiar face
Of the broad living world, where every beam
From the great centre of all-nurturing light
Shot earthwards, bears upon its procreant wing
Miraculous virtue, at whose touch Earth's slime
Welters with every reasonable form
Of heaving life, and from the conscious ground

Upsprings the flower in every dainty type
Of measured beauty rare, and undulant woods
With leafy large embroidery outspread,
Work of that sleepless surge of shaping soul
That makes the world a world, and fills the eye
With wonder and delight.—But I will cease,
Lest my fond babblement disturb the calm
And beauty of this place; and evermore,
When Sabbath bells in dingy city toll,
Through smoke, and dusty tramp, and rattling wheels,
And multitudinous roar of crowded life,
I will bethink me of thy pool serene,
Loch Duich, with fair fringe of friendly green,
And gleaming cots, and the low plash far-heard
Of peaceful Sabbath oars, and the quaint grace
Of tufted crag, and vagrant-climbing birch,
And lone Glenshiel, with strong rock-scooping flood
Fenced by green cones, and granite peaks sublime.

TAIN:

THE CHAPEL OF SAINT DUTHACH.

I SATE in the old church yard
Beside the chapel grey,
Where holy Duthach was born and bred,
On a knoll of the sandy bay.

I sate on the old grey stones
Where the homes of the dead men be,
And a grey mist curtained the rayless sky,
And a grey mist girdled the sea.

I sate, and I looked on the old grey town
That looks on the old grey sea,
And thoughts and shapes of the old grey time
Came down, like a dream, on me.

And I saw the shrine of the holy man,
And candles burning bright

Around the chest where his body lay,
By day, and eke by night.

And crowds of low-bent worshippers
Around the sacred rail,
Hard, weathered men, and blooming youths,
And maids with decent veil,

And knights of iron grasp I saw,
With stout achievement crowned,
Bowing their heads, like drooping flowers,
Upon the hallowed ground:

And mitred priests, and shaven monks
Belted with hempen rope,
And legates, and proud cardinals
Who served the purple Pope:

And burghers too, in burly state,
With chain and mace were there,
And many a tattered pilgrim loon
Uncouth with matted hair:

And kings, who from palatial halls
A barefoot journey came,
Through Duthach's potent grace to shrive
Their souls from guilty blame.

And one I saw—a Caithness man,
Who ran with dusty feet,
In Duthach's holy shrine to claim
The unprofaned retreat,

From chase of the red-handed men,
McNeills, a lawless crew,
Who spurned the ban of the holy girth,
And harried, and plundered, and slew,

And flung their brands on holy roof,
And feared nor priest nor king,
And earned with blood the robbers' wage
On gallows-tree to swing.

And I saw:—but while I sate and mused,
And gazed with shaping eye,

The steam-car looming through the fog
Came sharply hissing by.

I hugged my plaid, I grasped my staff,
The air-spun show was fled,
And through the Fen to Bonar brig,
With snorting speed I sped.

SUTHERLANDSHIRE.

BONNIE STRATHNAVER.

(SONG.)

BONNIE STRATHNAVER ! Sutherland's pride,
With thy stream softly-flowing, and mead spreading wide ;
Bonnie Strathnaver, where now are the men
Who peopled with gladness thy green-mantled glen ?
Bonnie Strathnaver !

Bonnie Strathnaver ! Sutherland's pride,
Sweet is the breath of the birks on thy side ;
But where is the blue smoke that curled from the glen,
When thy lone hills were dappled with dwellings of men ?
Bonnie Strathnaver !

Bonnie Strathnaver! O tearful to tell
Are the harsh deeds once done in thy bonnie green dell,
When to rocks of the cold blastful ocean were driven
The men on thy green turfy wilds who had thriven,
Bonnie Strathnaver!

When the lusty-thewed lad, and the light-tripping maid,
Looked their last on the hills where their infancy strayed,
When the grey, drooping sire, and the old hirpling dame
Were chased from their hearths by the fierce-spreading flame,
Bonnie Strathnaver!

Bonnie Strathnaver! Sutherland's pride,
Wide is the ruin that's spread on thy side;
The bramble now climbs o'er the old ruined wall,
And the green fern is rank in the tenantless hall,
Bonnie Strathnaver!

Bonnie Strathnaver, Sutherland's pride,
Loud is the baa of the sheep on thy side,
But the pipe and the song, and the dance are no more,
And gone the brave clansmen who trod thy green floor.
Bonnie Strathnaver!

Bonnie Strathnaver, Sutherland's pride,
Vain are the tears which I weep on thy side;
The praise of the bard is the meed of the glen,
But where is the charm that can bring back the men
To Bonnie Strathnaver?

CAITHNESS.

JOHN O'GROAT'S HOUSE.

WHAT went ye out for to see?
A rock in the midst of the wave,
Where the north winds bluster and rave,
Caledonia's outermost rim
Kissing the ocean grim,
Skerry, and holm, and stack
Fringed with the foam and the wrack—
This went ye out for to see?
Not in the midst of the wave,
Rocks where the north winds rave,
Caledonia's outermost rim
Kissing the billowy brim,
Skerry, and holm, and stack
Fringed with the foam and the wrack—
Not this went I out for to see;
But the house of the famous John Groat,

In the face of the rain and the wind,
With travel and toil I sought;
But seeking I failed to find,
When to Huna I wandered alone.

What went ye out for to see?
Houses all hoary and grey
Washed by the barren sea-spray;
Flagstones and slates in a row,
Where hedges are frightened to grow;
Shrubs in the flap of the breeze,
Sweating to make themselves trees;
This went ye out for to see?
Not houses all hoary and grey
Washed by the barren sea-spray;
Flagstones and slates in a row,
Where hedges are frightened to grow;
Shrubs in the flap of the breeze,
Sweating to make themselves trees;
Not this went I out for to see;
But the house of the famous John Groat,
In the face of the rain and the wind,
With travel and toil I sought;

But seeking I failed to find,
When to Huna I wandered alone.

What went ye out for to see?
In face of the billows a beach,
The whitest that Phœbus can bleach,
The beautiful ruin of shells,
Where fishes once lived in their cells,
Now soft and silvery spread,
Like leaves from a flowery bed—
This went ye out for to see?
Not by the billows a beach,
The whitest that Phœbus can bleach,
The beautiful ruin of shells,
Where fishes once lived in their cells,
Now soft and silvery spread,
Like leaves from a flowery bed;
Not this went I out for to see;
But the house of the famous John Groat,
In the face of the wet and the wind,
With travel and toil I sought,
But seeking I failed to find,
When to Huna I wandered alone.

What went ye out for to see?
A dance of seabirds on the wing,
Where like down on the zephyr they swing;
The gull with his grey plume spread,
The gullimot dipping his head,
The puffin with snow-white breast,
The long-necked cormorant's crest—
This went ye out for to see?
Not dance of seabirds on the wing,
Where like down on the zephyr they swing;
The gull with his grey plume spread,
The gullimot dipping his head,
The puffin with snow-white breast,
The long-necked cormorant's crest;
Not this went I out for to see;
But the house of the famous John Groat,
In the face of the rain and the wind,
With travel and toil I sought;
But seeking I failed to find,
When to Huna I wandered alone.

What went ye out for to see?
Long ledges of sandy rock

With hammer of science to knock,
And redeem into blaze of the light
Strange fishes imprisoned in night,
Millions of billions of ages
Ere Moses indited his pages;
This went ye out for to see?
Not long ledges of rock
With hammer of science to knock,
And redeem into blaze of the light
Strange fishes imprisoned in night,
Millions of billions of ages
Ere Moses indited his pages;
Not this went I out for to see?
But the house of the famous John Groat,
In the face of the rain and the wind,
With travel and toil I sought;
But seeking I failed to find,
When to Huna I wandered alone.

What went ye out for to see?
The rush and the whirl of the tides,
Where the fretted Atlantic rides,
Like a steed with snow-white mane

Beating the sounding plain,
Where the ship with tight-drawn sail
Strains to the stress of the gale—
This went ye out for to see?
Not the rush and the whirl of the tides
Where the fretted Atlantic rides
Like a steed with snow-white mane,
Beating the sounding plain,
Where the ship with tight-drawn sail
Strains to the stress of the gale;
Not this went I out for to see;
But the house of the famous John Groat,
In the face of the rain and the wind,
With travel and toil I sought;
But seeking I failed to find,
When to Huna I wandered alone.

What went ye out for to see?
The hull of a mastless bark,
Like the shadow of death in the dark,
Drifting, drifting away,
'Neath the tempest's brazen bray,
Tossed on the horn of the wave,

And gulphed in a bubbling grave—
This went ye out for to see?
Not the hull of a mastless bark,
Like the shadow of death in the dark,
Drifting, drifting away,
'Neath the tempest's brazen bray,
Tossed on the horn of the wave,
And gulphed in a bubbling grave;
Not this went I out for to see;
But the house of the famous John Groat,
In the face of the rain and the wind,
With travel and toil I sought;
But seeking I failed to find,
When to Huna I wandered alone.

Now the truth I speak to thee.
Thou hast spent thy toil for nought;
For the house of John de Groat
May on earth no more be found;
Thou must seek it underground
With the Picts who loved to dwell
In the grey and grimy cell.
Yes! my toil I spent for nought,

For the house of John de Groat
May on earth no more be found;
I must seek it underground
With the Picts who loved to dwell
In the grey and grimy cell.

Now this truth I plainly see,
Thou hast found me fool of heart
That I sought the house of Groat;
But not empty I depart,
Having fed both eye and ear
With what few men see and hear,
With the lovely and the grand
At the far end of the land,
In green summer glory shown.
So I praise the name of Groat;
Tho' I found not what I sought,
Yet I did the thing I ought
When to Huna I wandered alone.

WICK:

THE HERRING FISHERY.

O life, O death, O countless multitude
Of things that are, and things that were before,
Of things that die to build up finer food
For things that live on their disruptured store!
From this grey town a thousand-masted fleet,
Helmed by strong men who tread the earth with pride,
Rides forth in full-sailed pomp, to gather meat
From glancing lives that fret the peopled tide.
Thus Nature from her prostrate ruin rears
Her vanquished head, still victor in the strife,
And through progressive deaths in stately tiers
Mounts to the stage which bears the noblest life,
Where vilest loss transformed to splendid gain
Shines glorious; and no force is spent in vain.

PERTHSHIRE.

LOCH RANNOCH.

O'ER lone Loch Rannoch's clear far-stretching flood
With gentlest curl the Sabbath breezes creep;
No sound disturbs thy contemplative mood,
Save the meek cry of the far-bleating sheep,
And the low hum of distant waterfall.
Here, on these voiceless banks, if thou can'st keep
Pure Sabbath for thyself, and wisely reap
Harvest of native thought, without the call
Of fervid preacher, I forbid thee not;
God dwelleth not in temples made with hands,
Nor chains His presence to one charmed spot.
But they are wise who kneel in brothered bands
At hallowed stations: where their fathers trod,
Fools will despise the beaten way to God.

LOCH RANNOCH MOOR.

In the lone glen the silver lake doth sleep;
Sleeps the white cloud upon the sheer black hill:
All moorland sounds a solemn silence keep;
I only hear the tiny trickling rill
'Neath the red moss. Athwart the dim grey pall,
That veils the day, a dusky fowl may fly;
But, on this bleak brown moor, if thou shalt call
For men, a spirit will sooner make reply.
Come hither, thou whose agile tongue doth flit
From theme to theme with change of wordy war,
Converse with men makes sharp the glittering wit,
But Wisdom whispers truth, when crowds are far.
Come, sit thee down upon this old grey stone;
Men learn to think, and feel, and pray, alone.

AT LOCH ERICHT.

I.

No railways here !—thank Heaven at length I'm free
From travelling Cockneys, wondering at a hill,
From lisping dames, who from the city flee,
To nurse feigned raptures at a tumbling rill !
From huge hotels and grandly-garnished inns,
With all things but true kindness in their plan,
And from sleek waiters, whose obsequious grins
Do make me loathe the very face of man !
Smooth modern age, which no rough line doth mar,
All men must praise thy very decent law !
But in this bothie I am happier far,
Where I must feed on oats, and sleep on straw.
For why ?—here men look forth from honest faces,
And are what thing they seem, without grimaces.

AT LOCH ERICHT.

II.

O HEAVENS! a lovelier day ne'er shone upon
The gleaming beauty of the long-drawn flood!
Come hither, if Scotland boasts a loyal son,
And nurse the holy patriotic mood!
These crags that sink precipitous to the waves,
These floods that gush down the sheer-breasted hill,
They were not made to train soft fashion's slaves,
And to nice modes to trim the pliant will.
A strong rude heart once burned in Scottish men,
And Scotland showed her stamp upon her sons;
The mountain-nursling all might surely ken;
But now through all one English smoothness runs;
Men cut their manners, as their clothes, by rule,
But none grows strong in Nature's breezy school.

A SONG OF BEN LEDI.

Come, sit on Ledi's old grey peak,
And sing a song with me,
Where the wild bird whirrs o'er the mosses bleak,
And the wild wind whistles free!
'Tis sweet to lie on the tufted down,
Low low in the gowany glen;
But proud is the foot that stands on the crown
Of the glorious Ledi Ben.

Come hither, ye townsmen, soot-besoiled,
Who cower in dingy nooks,
On whom no ray of the sun hath smiled,
To shame your sombre looks.
Come, closely mewed in steaming lanes,
Whom musty chambers pen,
And look abroad on the world of God
From the top of this glorious Ben!

Come ye who sit with moody pains,
And curious-peering looks,
Clogging the veins of your laden brains
With the dust of your maundering books.
Not in your own dim groping souls,
Nor in words of babbling men,
But here His wonders God unrolls—
On the peak of the Ledi Ben.

Look forth on these far-stretching rows
Of huge-ridged mountains high;
There God his living Epos shows
Of powers that never die.
Far north, far west, each glowing crest
Thy sateless view may ken;
Where proudly they stand to rampart the land,
With this glorious Ledi Ben.

And lo! where eastward, far beneath,
The broad and leafy plain
Spreads on the banks of silvery Teith
Stout labour's fair domain;

The smoke from the long white-glancing town,
The loch that gleams in the glen,
All rush to thine eye when castled high
On this glorious Ledi Ben.

Come, sit with me, ye sons of the free,
Join hearty hand to hand,
And claim your part in the iron heart
Of the Grampian-girded land!
Soft lands of the South on rosy beds
May cradle smoother men,
But the Northern knows his strength when he treads
The heath of the old grey Ben.

Come, sit with me and praise with glee,
On the peak of this granite Ben,
The brave old land, where the stream leaps free
Down the rifts of the sounding glen.
Land of strong hands and glowing hearts,
And mother of stalwart men,
Who nurse free thoughts where the wild breeze floats
On the peak of the Ledi Ben.

ABERDEENSHIRE.

BRAEMAR:

THE THREE CHURCHES.

THE clear bell o'er the moor sounds far;
And, through the lone sparse-peopled glen,
Its weekly freight the Sabbath car
Brings down of grave God-fearing men.

Three churches in the village stand;
This serves the State, and that is Free,
The third doth own the Pope's command,
And God in Heaven claims all the three.

'Tis well. Some men do sigh for unity,
And for God's sheep one fold prepare,
To live a faultless fair community,
Somewhere on Earth, or in the air.

Fond fools! in father Noah's ark,
(The learn'd can tell how long ago),
Had every dog its separate bark,
And every face its diverse show.

Look round on sky, and sea, and plain,
This glowing scene of bright divinity,
One single law, as with a chain,
Doth bind the various vast infinity.

From breeze-borne moth to stable-man
One type informs the breathing race;
The law, that rules God's Protean plan,
Is sameness with a shifting face.

All units from one centre flow,
And all the strangely-woven strife
Of high and low, and swift and slow,
Makes music in a larger life.

As the huge branches of a tree
Clash, when the stormy buffets blow;
Hostile they seem, but one they be,
And by the strife that shakes them grow.

So the vast world of adverse things,
That with a reeling fury nod,
Battles of churches and of kings,
Have one unshaken root in God.

Who this believes will fear no harm
From counted articles, or beads;
There's room in God's wide-circling arm
For all that swear by all the creeds.

Creeds are but school-books, kindly given
To teach our stammering tongues to spell
His name; all help the good to Heaven,
And none can save the bad from Hell.

BEN MUICDHUI.

O'ER broad Muicdhui sweeps the keen cold blast,
Far whirrs the snow-bred, white-winged ptarmigan,
Sheer sink the cliffs to dark Loch Etagan,
And all the mount with shattered rock lies waste.
Here brew ship-foundering storms their force divine,
Here gush the fountains of wild-flooding rivers;
Here the strong thunder frames the bolt that shivers
The giant strength of the old twisted pine.
Yet, even here, on the bare waterless brow
Of granite ruin, I plucked a purple flower,
A delicate flower, as fair as aught, I trow,
That toys with zephyrs in my lady's bower.
So Nature blends her powers; and he is wise
Who to his strength no gentlest grace denies.

THE HIGHLANDER'S LAMENT.

Down Cluny's grassy glen there came an aged Highlandman,
But firm his step, and proud his heart with memories of his clan.
A shrewd clear-thoughted man was he—as many such there be
In Scotia's land—though plain his garb, and humble his degree;
And, like that wandering Greek, had travelled from his native glen,
And seen the cities, and known the minds of various-customed men;
And now with rich experience mild, but with a heart that burned
With the untamed fire of youth, he to his Highland home returned.
Gladly he breathed the breeze that blew from lofty Loch-na-Gar,

And his eye roamed freely o'er the purple braes of broad
Braemar.
Full many a thought of joyous days, that ne'er might
be again,
Full many a mist-enshrouded form was floating through
his brain;
But, when he came to Coldrach bridge, where the
forceful mountain torrent
Cuts through the pointed granite ledge with deep
dark-swirling current,
He sate him down; and, while his eye with streaming
sorrow fills,
He looked upon the bright green slope, that skirts the
adverse hills.
Full well that grassy knoll he knew; for there, in
summer time,
Oft had he wandered to and fro, when life was in its prime;
And thence, with early-roaming step, when the heath
was bright and dewy,
Oft-times had crossed the bald grey hill, to the pines
of Ballochbuie;
But now bleak rows of tumbled stones is all his sight
may know,

And thus he pours the sad lament, while free the salt tears flow :—

"O woe is me! my Highland home—the thought consumes my brain—
Here, in my native Highland glen, I seek my home in vain!
The Highland glen to Highland men may be a home no more;
They drave them far, by ruthless law, across wide ocean's roar.
O heartless lords, O loveless law, with calculation cold,
Ye sold the mighty force, that glows in faithful hearts, for gold!
Ungrateful lords, with our good swords, how oft, at your command,
With heavy blow we smote the foe, and pledged for you the land!
Now in your halls ye sit at ease, and, with uncaring smile,
Ye sign the word, that bans the faithful peasant from the soil.

Who gave the broad domain to you—did man, or God in Heaven,—
That the stout tillers of the land, might from their homes be driven?
To oust the men that held the glen, through long dark years of danger,
That ye might gather gold at ease, from one huge-acred stranger?
Woe unto you, the grasping crew, that make your acres wide,
That Earth may be alone for you, with place for none beside!
Who from their humble cabins cast the meek industrious poor,
That ye may stalk the stags for sport, and scour with guns the moor!
Even at your gates the judgment waits; there is a law divine
That damns your deeds. The fine will come, though lords and lawyers join."

The old man spake; and wiped his brow; and rose; and sate again;

For his limbs were weak with the whirling thoughts
that shook his troubled brain.
But up he rose, and, with heavy step, went slowly
pacing on,
By Callater bridge, along the road that winds to
Castleton,
Till he came to the ridge that skirts the hill, and the
knoll of grassy green,
And the long grey rows of tumbled stones, where
houses once had been;
Then sate him down, as one that loves to nurse his
dreary mood,
And, after silence long, again his sad lament re-
newed:—

"O where be they, the merry crew, of lusty Highland
men,
Then, when the stout old Farqhuarson possessed the
peopled glen?
A kindly heart, I wis, had he; where'er his foot might
wend,
From winding Dcé to far Glenshee, the cottar called
him friend.

From door to door his step was known; with oaken staff in hand
He stood, and wove the easy talk, with the tillers of the land.
No harsh reproof they feared from him, no heartless lawyer's ban;
He owned the soil, but rather owned the hearts of all the clan.
The girded quoich they brimmed for him; for him they spread the board;
The coffers of their hoarded gold they oped, to serve their lord.
O then, when lords who stalk the deer, and prince and peer, were far,
The happiest glen was Cluny then, of all the broad Braemar.
But now, O heavens! I sit beneath this stunted rowan tree,
Where all is desolate and drear, that once was joy to me.
Here, in the house where I was born, the uncropped thistle grows,
The nettle and the tansy, 'mid the tumbled stony rows;

And one big farmer holds the glen, that once did
count a score,
And all that loved me once, and live, are far from
Albin's shore.
Three brothers once were mine: three goodlier men
ne'er trod the heather;
Their strength was like the gushing streams, their
looks like sunny weather.
One crossed the Atlantic's roar, and vowed, with
sweatful hard endeavour,
To make Glen Cluny's name revive, beyond St. Law-
rence river;
But, o'er Quebec the glooming wing of pestilence was
spread,
And he, the strongest of the strong, was numbered
with the dead.
The second followed in his track, but found a briny
pillow;
Alone the blazing ship went down, into the yawning
billow.
The third in far Australia lived, and went to dig for gold—
The cursed gold! — at Melbourne, and washed the
twinkling mould;

But, as he slept, with the gathered ore beneath his pillow rolled,
A ruffian stole his noble life, and seized the gleaming gold.
And I am left. But where, O where is she, to me more dear,
That lived with me in Castleton, one happy, happy year?
My bosom's wife, my joy, my life, so bright-faced once and gay,
But, when the last sad clearing came, she pined and died away.
Her father and her mother dear, her blooming sisters three,
They went for work to Forfar town, they went to far Dundee.
Scant work they found, and ill they thrived; the thick gross-burthened air
Was poison to their mountain blood; they drooped and faded there.
The father, first, and mother died; and then the black disease,
That travels from the baleful East, with rapid scythe did seize

Two of the blooming sisters three; the third—I dare not tell—
She lived; but want had baited vice; and to that depth she fell
Whence few may rise. Such stroke on stroke of over-topping woe
Broke my wife's heart. She died; and sleeps the mountain turf below.
And now upon my native sod I'm left alone, alone,
Even as this rowan tree that nods, above the roofless stone!"

The old man wept a little space; and, while he heaved a sigh,
The hearth and blackened gable met his woeful-wandering eye:
The very mint, that in his father's garden thickly grew,
That o'er the stones redundant spread, with sorrowful ken he knew;
The mint that once, with careful hand, on Sabbath mornings bright,
His mother wont to pluck, and wrapt it in her kerchief white,

When to the kirk they went. This sight did sharper
point his pain ;
And forth, with harsh invective blent, his sorrow burst
again :—

" By Heaven, it is a lawless land ! we boast that we
are free ;
So is the wild cat ; so the hawk ; all savage things are
free.
The lord is free to bind the soil, the rich to crush the
poor ;
The poor—God knows he hath no right to tread the
trackless moor,
Lest he should fray the game ! Who made the winged
fowl that sweep
The measureless air, their property, whose close cold
gripe doth keep
The solid acres? Not their sweat, or care, or know-
ledge speedeth
The crimson berries of the moor, on which the gorcock
feedeth.
The wandering air, the flowing stream, the self-sown
grassy sod,

They bind with laws for their own gain. Man made
the laws, not God.
The flatterer of a perjured king, some hundred years ago,
Wise in the slavish arts by which smooth baseness
learns to grow,
Was titled earl or duke (the foolish world is ruled by
names)
With a large sweep of roods, which now by printed
act he claims,
Thralled to himself, and to his brood of spendthrift
heirs for ever;
While the poor labouring man, who to the great and
general Giver
Stands in like right with lords, to feed soft luxury's
pampered maw,
Must break the clod, and then be cast, by Britain's
partial law
From the dear plot, which from the waste his sweatful
toil redeemed.
And now the land, that once with groups of happy
clansmen teemed,
Who with a kindly awe revered the clan's protecting
head,

Lies desolate; and stranger lords, by vagrant pleasure led,
Track the lone deer; and, for the troops of stalwarth kilted men,
One farmer and one forester people the joyless glen!

O Albin! O my country! thou art great among the nations;
But thou hast sins: great glaring sins, that vex high Heaven's patience.
Thou lovest gold; and, where the kind and human heart should be,
Thou'rt dry as ashes. Thou art proud; to men of low degree
Thou dealest harsh unequal laws; and, where thy peers debate,
Ermined and surpliced slaves of wealth let beggared justice wait,
While fools debauch thy nobler sense by cant of Church and State.
O Albin! O my country! O my dear-loved Highland home,

The lust of gold hath ruined thee, the lust that ruined
Rome

Thus spake the aged Highlandman, with bitter grief; and then,
With sober pace he wound his way, down the clear-watered glen.
As when a storm hath cleared the air with thunderous gusty war,
More calm of soul he slept that night, at Castleton of Braemar.

ARRAN.

GLEN ROSA.

To lone Glen Rosa's rocky dell,
'Neath the sheer side of high Goat-fell,
Where pinnacled cliffs of granite grey,
Huge-piled in savage quaint array,
Cut sharp the sky,
Come whoso shuns the ways of men,
And let him try,
If in this waste and houseless glen,
A temple made for solitude,
There live some charm to touch his mood,
That hungering cries for something good,
To heal his sorrow!

Come thou, who, whirling round and round
In social eddies, dost confound
Through very men the man within thee;
The trick of thought if thou would'st win thee,
Come here, and borrow

From rock, and stream, and lonely dell,
Green fern, and purple heather bell,
What quiet power with them doth dwell,
To heal thy sorrow!

Or art thou one of haughty soul,
Who, when the tide of life ran high,
Like a steed rushing from control,
Did'st mark, with dictatorial eye,
Some proud position,
And called it thine; but, ere the bark,
That was to thee salvation's ark,
Had reached its harbour, He, whose will
Sways every human chance and skill,
Smote thy ambition
With shipwreck. Prostrate now thou liest,
The hunter late of lofty game,
As one, to whom lowest and highest
Of human fortunes is the same.
Come hither, haughty heart, and see
The thing that's brothered most to thee
In all creation—

That pyramid grey, the glen's north Guard,
Which with a million storms hath warred,
Whose shattered peak and front is scarred
With desolation.
There, if thou hast no kindlier food
Than pride, to nurse thy bitter mood,
Preach to thyself in solitude,
And be a man.
Though thy proud schemes be crushed to dust,
Like the old granite's crumbled crust,
Hold to this plan,
With the old mountains of the land,
To stand and bear, and bear and stand,
And be a man!

But, if not wholly thou art hard,
Nor to each gracious inlet barred
Of gentle feeling,
Attend; amid this savage grandeur,
There breathes a spirit not untender,
With balmy healing
Fraught to the chastened soul. Behold
These giant-slabs of granite old,

That mail the mountain's shelvy side;
Even in their chinks the delicate pride
Blooms of the starry Saxifrage.
So rich is God. From age to age
He in the least things and the lowest,
Which scarce thine eye notes where thou goest,
His power displays;
Not more in noon-day glory bright,
Than in the worm, that shines by night
With living rays.
This Goat-fell, king of Arran's hills,
Though harsh he show, and hard, like thee,
That scarce a stunted rowan tree
Fringes his skirt;—not the less he
Is parent of a thousand rills,
That, from his deep cells trickling free,
Through beds of swelling verdure ooze,
As soft and kind as summer dews,
When softest falling.
Or look thou there, where, leaping wild
From rock to rock the mountain-child
With boisterous brawling,
Swells to a river—wandering there

By the treeless pool so glassy fair,
Where granite ruin paves the bed
With rocky amber richly spread,
Even in that thin and loamless brook,
The mountain-trout, from nook to nook
All nimbly glancing,
I spied; there too was life; and there
Was joy entrancing,
Which full life ever brings. Not bare
Of joy is Goat-fell's barest spot;
Nor bare art thou, if thou wilt not
Hug thee in self-nursed proud despair.
Here, where hoar Chaos seems to hold
A remnant of his empire old,
And with gashed brow and stony eyes,
The primal Beauty shattered lies,
In blank prostration;
Even here the living God doth lurk,
On death's foundation
Who never tires to pile the work
Of new creation.

Trust thou to Him; and, if the rod

Smites thee from heaven, bend thou to God.
Amid these girdling mountains' grandeur
Feel thyself small, and freely render
Thy heart to Him. Thou need'st not seek
Far here, far there; let Nature speak;
And, if thou feel'st a burden, pour,
Like yon young torrent gushing o'er,
The free repentance:
Thus His full Mercy's gracious store
With liberal dash thy guilt shall score,
And blot the sentence.
Thou with mild wisdom softened then,
From lone Glen-Rosa's rocky glen
Shalt go to-morrow;
Bearing, from Rosa's mountains hoar,
The ancient soul-subduing lore
Of sacred sorrow.

A SABBATH MEDITATION IN ARRAN.

The Sabbath bells are travelling o'er the hill;
The gentle breeze across the fresh-reaped fields
Blows fitful; scarcely, on the broad smooth bay,
With full white-gleaming sail, the slow ship moves
Thin float the clouds; serene the mountain stands
And all the plain in hallowed beauty lies.
God of the Sabbath, on Thy holy day
'Tis meet to praise Thee! In the high-domed fane,
Glorious with all the legendary pomp
Of pictured saints, where skilful singers swell
The curious chant, or on the lonely hill,
Where, on grey cliff and purple heather, shines
The shadowless sun at noon, Thou hear'st alike.
Vainly the narrow wit of narrow men
Within the walls which priestly lips have blest,
In the fixed phrases of a formal creed,
Would crib Thy presence; Thou art more than all

The shrines that hold Thee; and our wisest creeds
Are but the lispings of a forward child,
To spell the Infinite. Kings have drawn the sword;
Lawyers have wrangled, to declare Thy being;
And convocations of high-mitred men
The foaming vials of sacerdotal wrath
Outpoured, and, with tempestuous proud conceit,
Shook the vast world about a phrase to name Thee,
In vain. Thou, like the thin impassive air,
Dost cheat the grasp of subtlest-thoughted sage;
And half our high theology is but
The shadow, which man's poor and clouded ken
Hath cast across Thy brightness. I would sing
Thy praise with humble heart, and, like the lyre
Wind-swept, the comings of Thy breath would wait,
To wake my rapture. Lift up your heads, ye hills!
And nod His praise, ye sharp far-stretching lines
Of crags storm-shattered, and ye jagged peaks
Sky-cleaving! you His mighty power upshot
From the red ocean of His nethermost fire,
In primal ages: there in form ye lay,
In seething lakes, your molten masses huge,
In turbid waves, with inorganic roll;

Far-pulsing through the dark abysmal space
Of chaos; thence His word creative hove
Your marshalled ridges; rank on rank ye rose,
Granite and gneiss; and every ordered kind
That careful science counts; the giant frame
Of this fair world, of peace-enfolden vales
Storm-fronting fence, and bulwark ever sure.
Ye mountain torrents, with far-sweeping foam,
Ye leaping cataracts, and deep-swirling pools,
Ye streams with the full-gathered grandeur rolling
Of countless rills, from huge far-sundered Alps,
Ye waters, with your thousand voices, praise
The mighty Lord! He of your sleepless floods
Is the unsleeping soul. All motion comes
From Him. Thou ocean, with thy living belt
Girdling the globe, whether serene, as now,
Thou liest, licking with an innocent ripple
The feet o' the green-throned isles, or, like a spurred
And furious charger, wild from coast to coast
Drivest far-sounding,—thou, in all thy changes,
Art full of God; yea, all Thy works, O Lord,
Are full of Thee! and who is dull to these
Shall from the teaching of the schools come back

With blinder blindness. He shall mount in vain
His telescope, to spy Thee in the clouds,
Who in green herb and starry flower, beneath
His vagrant foot, hath failed to see and love
Thy manifest beauty. O make clear my sense
Thou great Revealer, to the grand array
Of open mysteries that encompass round
Our daily walk with Godhead, that no vain
And wordy fool may cheat my facile ear
With echoed volleys of man's crude conceit,
Misnamed God's thunder! From Thyself direct
Thy secret comes to all, whom Thou shalt deem
Worthy to find it. Councils, doctors, priests,
Are but the signs that point us to the spring
Whence flow Thy living waters; and, alas!
Too oft with wavering, or with cowardly hand
Back-turned, they point. Teach Thou my stablished soul
To seek Thy teaching, Lord, and trust in Thee.

The generations of uncounted men
Have hymned Thy praises, Lord. Their stammering tongues

With monster'd doctrine magnified the power
Of Him, whose vastness they were fain to grasp,
But could not. Even the folly of the fool
Shall praise Thee, Lord. Thou hast a place for all.
The wicked and the weak are but the steps,
Whereon the wise shall mount, to see Thy face;
And mighty churches, and high-vaunted faiths,
Are but the schools, wherein Thy centuries train
The infant peoples to the manly reach
Of pure devotion; and most wise are they,
Who hear one hymn of varied truth through all
The harmonious discord of strange witnesses—
Prophets and martyrs, priests and meek-eyed saints,
And rapt diviners, with imperfect tongue,
Babbling Thy praises. Egypt's brutish gods,
Dog-faced, hawk-headed, crocodile, and cat,
Snake-eating ibis, and the spotted bull,
Not without apt significance did type
Thy severed functions to a sense-bound race.
In sea and sky, green tree, and flowing stream,
In flying bird, and creeping beast, they found
Pictorial speech, and speaking signs of what
They crudely guessed of Thee. To clearer Greeks

Old Uranus, and primal Titans strong,
And supreme Jove, with dark and thunderous locks,
Throned like a king, with sceptre in his hand,
And ministrant eagle, spake Thy mighty power
With awful grace. Each seized a part of Thee,
And, with a fond assurance, deemed to hold
Thy wide Infinity in earthly bonds
For human needs. Nor less the Christian priest
Portentous erred, when with rash hand he clutched
The awful Triune symbol, and defined
The immeasurable Majesty Supreme
With subtle phrase and scientific rule,
And with strong fence of wiry logic barred
Thy bristling name, from touch of thought profane;
Then, from a throne high-seated, and girt round
With triple-tiered presumption, grasped Thy bolt,
Sported Thy thunder, and with Thy best friends
Filled a far-dreaded Hell, that he might seem
A god on Earth, whom awe-struck, grovelling men
Might see, and feel, and handle. The pale monk,
Wasting his flesh within a cold damp cell,
And straining his dull vision, till he saw
God's features, in the strange putrescent light

Of his own sick imaginings—this man caught
A glimpse of Thee, and, with such fiery haste
Did hug Thee, and with prostrate worship fell,
That nevermore his head he dared to lift
Erect, and with proud-sweeping glance survey
The free-sown wealth of Thy broad-blooming world,
Man's privilege.—On so nice a pivot turns
True wisdom; here an inch, or there, we swerve
From the just balance; by too much we sin,
And half our errors are but truths unpruned.

The errors of Thy creatures praise Thee, Lord.
Not they who err are damned; but who, being wrong,
In obdurate persistency to err
Refuse all bettering. Hope for such is none,
Which lives for all, who flounder boldly on
Through quaggy bogs, till firmer footing found
Gives grateful prospect. One Deceiver haunts
The hearts of faithless men; his name is FEAR.
O Thou, who ridest glorious through the skies,
In thunder or in sunshine strong the same,
The Almighty builder of this radiant whole
Whose brightness blinds star-eyed philosophy,

Whose vastness makes our staggered intellect beg
For utterance vainly—Father of all Power,
Eternal Fount of liberty and life,
Free, measureless, unspent—if e'er my voice
Rose to Thy throne, in reverent truthful prayer,
Slay me this demon, yellow Fear, that maims
The arm of enterprise, nips the bud of hope,
And freezes the great ocean of our life,
That should run riot in the praise of Thee,
With wave on wave of high heroic deeds.
O may this Sabbath, with its gentle dews
Shed by Thy Spirit on my chastened soul,
Revive the blighted bud of thought, and lift
This low-crushed life into a mighty tree,
Wide-armed and waving with fair summer fruits
Exuberant-clustered !—May all Sabbaths be
A ripe and mellow season to my thought,
Lovely as golden Autumn's purple eve,
Genial as sleep, whence the tired limb refreshed
Leaps to new action, and appointed toil,
With steady hope, sure faith, and sober joy.

GENERAL.

BONNIE BLACKWATER.

Bonnie Blackwater,
'Neath the mountain's brow
Roaring and brawling and swirling with glee,
Round by the roots of the red rowan tree,
Where the plumes of the fern weave a chaplet for thee;
Whence comest thou?

I'm the Blackwater,
Born in the sky,
My mother the mist, and she fed me with dew;
In the little black tarn to stature I grew,
Which the men who love me call Loch Duhh;
Thence come I.

Bonnie Blackwater,
Whither goest thou?
By the old grey crag that nods o'er thee,
By the broad-browed Ben that slopes to thee,
By the purple brae, and the bonnie green lea,
Whither goest thou?

Thou Saxon stranger,
With mild blue eye,
By the crag, and the brae, and the bonnie green lea,
I wend, and I bend, and I swirl with glee
To the long blue loch that runs up from the sea
Thither go I.

Bonnie Blackwater,
And is it then so?
And wilt thou be lost in the wide, wide sea,
Far from the crag, and the brae, and the lea,
Lost to the mountain, and hid from me
In ocean's flow?

Thou mild-eyed stranger,

It is not so;

Up from the sea fine vapours rise,

Where the white cloud sails, and the light bird flies,

And they float me back to my native skies;

Thither I go.

HIGHLAND INNS.

I.

THE age is grown too vast: a monster plan
Must herald every sounding step it takes;
No will counts singly, and pretentious man
Is nothing'd by the huge machines he makes.
I love small things—a little bird that sings,
A little flower beside a wimpling brook,
A little child with light imaginings,
A little hour lent to a thoughtful book.
But of all little things I chiefly prize,
On a lone moor, a little Highland Inn,
Where, amid misty Bens and scowling skies,
And the unsleeping torrent's sleepy din,
A little maid attends with ready smiles
The foot-worn guest, and blazing faggots piles.

HIGHLAND INNS.

II.

More high-tier'd inns!—and shall I ever be
  Pursued by London pomp and London flare?
Enter who will, this place is not for me,
  Who love a lowly roof and simple fare.
Pile palaces for kings, where man to man
  Makes of his wealth theatric proud display;
But in the face of Nature's Titan plan
  These pompous toys should blush themselves away.
Give me—enough for comfort and for ease—
  A low white house that peeps into the glen,
An open moor, a clump of sheltering trees,
  And a few kindly words from kindly men:
These give—and, that the hours may smoothly pass,
A genial friend, and a well-tempered glass.

THE HIGHLAND MINISTER.

WHEN London brewers track the Scottish deer,
And lords breed sheep, who once commanded men,
Whom do the scanty peoplers of the glen
With faithful love, and service true revere?
I know him well: while lairds beyond the sea
Scatter their gold, and factors rack the glen,
He stands a messenger from God to men,
Sole priest and king, sole friend and father he.
Such ministry God's gospel gave, when first
Love struck the bonds from Sin's enthrallèd slaves,
As here some wreck of kindly care it saves
From grasping hands and hearts with hardness curst.
"*Not* YOURS, *but* YOU," the great Apostle said;
Now gain is good, and all things are a trade!

THE HIGHLAND MANSE.

If men were free to take, and wise to use
The fortunes richly strewn by kindly chance,
Then kings and mighty potentates might choose
To live and die lords of a Highland manse.
For why? Though that which spurs the forward mind
Be wanting here, the high-perched glittering prize,
The bliss that chiefly suits the human kind
Within this bounded compass largely lies—
The healthful change of labour and of ease,
The sober inspiration to do good,
The green seclusion, and the stirring breeze,
The working hand leagued with the thoughtful mood;
These things, undreamt by feverish-striving men,
The wise priest knows who rules a Highland glen.

THE LADY WHO LOVES THE HIGHLANDS.

I.

Adventurous men I've known the boldest born
In brawny Britain or in fiery France,
To face the pestilence, scale the Matterhorn,
Or through the battle's iron hail to dance.
But a frail woman with so stout a heart
To brave the billows and explore the glens
I never knew, as she who claims a part
In my small song piped in the land of Bens.
She on the wings of sacred duty flies
With shepherd's care to bless untended flocks;
And, like an angel missioned from the skies,
They greet her coming from the old grey rocks:
Poor island-dwellers by the lonely sea,
Whom all forget but God in heaven and she!

THE LADY WHO LOVES THE HIGHLANDS.

II.

Who loves the Highlands?—many love to shoot
The dun-plumed grouse on the broad-shouldered Ben;
And 'tis a kingly sport will none dispute
To track the red-deer through the treeless glen.
But I know one who loves the Highlands more
Than all who start the grouse or watch the deer,
The first to light on lone unfriended shore
With helping hand, and words of kindly cheer;
A woman, but whom manful purpose mails,
Of English blood, but through the Celtic seas
With torch of truth in venturous skiff she sails
From isle to isle, not studious of her ease.
Brave maid! thee following where Columba trod
The angels know who keep the book of God.

THE BOULDER.

THOU huge grey stone upon the heath,
With lichens crusted well,
I marvel much, if thou found breath,
What story thou would'st tell.
Oft wandering o'er the birch-grown hill,
To hear the wild winds moan,
I wonder still what chance or skill
Hath pitched thee here alone.

Where wert thou when Sire Adam first
Drew his mischanceful breath,
And in the bowers of bliss was cursed
With everlasting death,
Then when the damned fiend, who loves
The mask of snake and toad,
Crept into Paradisian groves,
And stole Eve's heart from God?

Thee in some seaward glen, I ween,
On sharp Loffodin's shore,
In frozen folds of gleaming green
The giant glacier bore.
Then down the steep it harshly slid,
Till, loosen'd from the high land,
With wrench enorm its compact form
Was launch'd, a floating island,

Into the Arctic deep. And thou,
In its stark bosom buried,
Through seas which huge Leviathans plough,
To this South strand wert hurried.
Then, from its cold close gripe unbound
By summer's permeant breath,
Thy wandering bulk a station found
On this wide sandy heath.

And here thy watch hath been, God knows
How long, and what a strange
Masque of Time's motley-shifting shows
Hath known thee without change.

Seas thou hast seen to dry land turned,
And dry land turned to seas,
And fiery cones that wildly burned,
Where flocks now feed at ease.

By thee the huge-limbed breathing things,
Crude Earth's portentous race,
Passed, and long lizard-shapes with wings
Swept o'er thy weathered face.
To thee first came man's jaded limb
From Eastern Babel far;
Around thee rose the Druid's hymn,
And the cry of Celtic war.

By thee the Roman soldier made
The mountain-cleaving road,
The Saxon boor beside thee strayed,
The lordly Norman strode.
The Papal monk thy measure took;
The proud priest triple-crowned
Mumbled a blessing from his book,
And claimed the holy ground.

By thee the insolent Edward passed,
When mad with eager greed,
A bridge of law-spun lies he cast
Across the Scottish Tweed.
And thou that vengeful day didst know,
When strong with righteous scorn
Young Freedom rose, and smote the foe,
At glorious Bannockburn.

Thou saw'st, when 'neath thy hoary shade
Upon the old brown sod
The plaided preacher sate, and made
His fervent prayer to God,
What time men tried by courtly art
To trim, and craft of kings,
The faith that soars from a people's heart,
And flaps untutored wings.

Thou saw'st, from out old unkempt bowers,
Huge peopled cities rise,
And merchant kings with stately towers
Invade the troubled skies.

Thick rose the giant vents, that mar
Heaven's lustrous blue domain,
And whirling wheel and hissing car
Disturb thy silent reign.

And thou—but what thou yet may'st see
The pious Muse withholds;
The curious art be far from me,
To unroll Time's fateful folds.
When Earth, that wheels on viewless wing,
Is twenty centuries older,
Some bard, where Scotland was, shall sing
The story of the Boulder.

SOLITUDE.

ALONE, alone, and all alone!
What could more lonely be?
'Neath the mist-wove pall of a dull grey night,
On a treeless shore and bare;
Nor wind's low sigh,
Nor sea-birds' cry,
Stirring the stagnant air;
And only one dim beacon-light
Far-twinkling o'er the sea.

And the wave that raved but yesternight,
So blustering and so wild,
Is smooth and faint, and crestless quite,
And breaks on the sand as faint and slight
As the whispers of a child.
Alone, alone, and all alone,

By the sad and silent sea,
On one far-twinkling beacon-light
I look out through the dull grey night
And only God with me!

THE SONG OF THE HIGHLAND RIVER.

DEW-FED am I
With drops from the sky,
Where the white cloud rests on the old grey hill;
Slowly I creep
Down the precipice steep,
Where the snow through the summer lies freezingly still;
Where the wreck of the storm
Lies shattered enorm,
I steal 'neath the stone with a tremulous rill;
My low-trickling flow
You may hear, as I go
Down the sharp-furrowed brow of the old grey hill,
Or drink from my well,
Grass-grown where I dwell,
In the clear granite cell of the old grey hill.

In the hollow of the hill
With my waters I fill
The little black tarn where the thin mist floats;

The deep old moss
Slow-oozing I cross,
Where the lapwing cries with its long shrill notes
Then fiercely I rush to the sharp granite edge,
And leap with a bound o'er the old grey ledge;
Like snow in the gale,
I drive down the vale,
Lashing the rock with my foamy flail;
Where the black crags frown,
I pour sheer down,
Into the caldron boiling and brown;
Whirling and eddying there I lie,
Where the old hawk wheels, and the blast howls by.

From the treeless brae
All green and grey,
To the wooded ravine I wind my way,
Dashing, and foaming, and leaping with glee,
The child of the mountain wild and free.
Under the crag where the stone crop grows,
Fringing with gold my shelvy bed,
Where over my head
Its fruitage of red,

The rock-rooted rowan tree blushfully shows,
I wind, till I find
A way to my mind,
While hazel, and oak, and the light ash tree,
Weave a green awning of leafage for me.
Fitfully, fitfully, on I go,
Leaping, or running, or winding slow,
Till I come to the linn where my waters rush,
Eagerly down with a broad-faced gush,
Foamingly, foamingly, white as the snow,
On to the soft green turf below;
Where I sleep with the lake as it sleeps in the glen,
'Neath the far-stretching base of the high-peaked Ben.

Slowly and smoothly my winding I make,
Round the dark-wooded islets that stud the clear lake;
The green hills sleep
With their beauty in me,
Their shadows the light clouds
Fling as they flee,
While in my pure waters pictured I glass
The light-plumed birches that nod as I pass.

Slowly and silently on I wend,
With many a bay and many a bend,
Luminous seen like a silvery line,
Shimmering bright in the fair sunshine,
Till I come to the pass, where the steep red scaur
Gleams like a watch-fire seen from afar,
Then out I ride,
With a full-rolling pride,
While my floods like the amber shine ;
Where the salmon rejoice
To hear my voice,
And the angler trims his line.

Gentlier now, with a kindly slope,
The green hills lie to the bright blue cope,
And wider the patches of green are spread,
Which Time hath won from my shifting bed.
And many a broad and sunny spot,
Where my waters wend,
With a larger bend,
Shows the white-fronted brown-thatched cot,
Where the labouring man with sweatful care,

Hath trimmed him a garden green and fair,
From the wreck of the granite bare.

And many a hamlet, peopled well
With hard-faced workmen, smokes from the dell;
Cunning to work with axe and hammer,
Cunning to sheer the fleecy flock,
Cunning, with blast and nitrous clamour,
To split the useful rock.
And many a rural church far-seen
Stands on the knolls of grassy green,
Where my swirling current flows;
And, with its spire high-pointed, shows
How man, that treads the earthy sod,
Claims fatherhood from God.

Now broader and broader my rich bed grows,
And deeper and deeper my full tide flows;
And, while onward I sail,
Like a ship to the gale,
With my big flood rolling amain,
The glen spreads out to a leafy vale,
And the vale spreads out to a plain.

And many a princely mansion good
Looks from the old thick-tufted wood,
On my clear far-winding line.
And many a farm, with acres spread,
Slopes gently to my fattening bed,
The farm, whose broad and portly lord
Loads with rich fare the liberal board,
And quaffs the ruby wine.
And richly, richly, round and round,
With green and golden pride, the ground
Swells undulant, gardened o'er and o'er
With beauty's bloom, and plenty's store;
And many a sheaf of yellow corn,
The farmer's healthful gain,
Up my soft-shaded banks is borne,
On the huge slow-labouring wain.
And many a yard well stacked with hay,
And many a dairy's trim array,
And many a high-piled barn I see,
And many a dance of rustic glee,
Where sweats the jocund swain.
And many a town thick-sown with steeples
With various wealth my border peoples,

And studs my sweeping line ;
While frequent the bridge of well-hewn stone,
Arch after arch, is proudly thrown,
My busy banks to join ;
Thus through the plain I wend my fruitful way,
To meet the sounding sea, and swell the briny bay.

The briny bay ! how fair it lies
Beneath the azure skies !
With its wide sweep of pebbly shore,
And the low far-murmuring roar
Of wave and wavelet sparkling bright
With a thousand points in the dancing light.
There round the promontory's base,
Bluff bulwark of the bay,
Free ranging with a lordly grace,
I wind my surging way,
To mingle with the main. Where wide
This way and that my turbid tide
Is spread, behold in pennoned pride
Strong Neptune's white-winged couriers ride !
From east to west,
Upon my breast,

Rich bales they bear, to swell the stores
Of merchant kings, who on my shores
Pile their proud palaces. Busily plying,
And with fleet winds in fleetness vying,
The fire-fed steam-consuming boat
Casts from its high-reared iron throat,
The many-volumed smoke, while heaves
Beneath the boiling track it leaves
My furrowed flood. Line upon line,
The ships that crossed the fretful brine,
Far-stretching o'er my spacious strand,
A myriad-masted army stand;
While many a pier, and many a mole,
Breaks my strong current as I roll;
And block and bolt, and bar and chain,
With giant-gates my flood detain,
To serve the seaman's need. Around,
Thick as a forest, from the ground
Street upon street, the city rears
Its pride, in strangely-clambering tiers
Of various-fashioned stone, while domes,
And spires, and pinnacles, and towers,
And wealthy tradesmen's terraced bowers

Nod o'er my troubled bed,
And Labour's many-chambered homes,
In straggling vastness, spread
Their smoking lines. Thus, where I flow,
The stream of being, growing as I grow,
Floods to a tumult, and much-labouring man,
Who, with my small beginnings, small began,
Ends where I end, and crowns his swelling plan

THE END.

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